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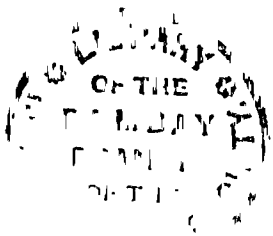

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SULTAN MURAD V

The Turkish Dynastic Mystery

1876—1895

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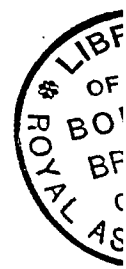

BY

DJEMALEDDIN BEY

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE.

The strange story which is set forth in these pages seems to invite something in the nature of a prelude. In presenting to English readers the fullest and most faithful portrait of MURAD EFFENDI, which has hitherto been made public, the publishers cannot but feel that they are giving currency to a human document which is of more than common interest and value. It is probable that it is only within the last few weeks, during which the reports of *The Daily Chronicle's* Special Commissioners at Constantinople have probed to the quick the present condition of Turkish politics, that English readers have formed any just opinion of the corruption and degraded horror of public life in the East. The attention thus drawn to a state of things, practically without parallel in contemporary history, is forcing upon Western politicians the necessity for prompt and effectual interference. So fast, indeed, are matters advancing towards some definite issue, that every day brings its uncertainty, and it is by no means impossible that, before these lines appear in print, the British Foreign Office may have been called upon to take action in a cause which concerns the composite peace of Europe.

At such a time, then, it would seem there is an especial importance in the present volume. For here we have an intricate and detailed portrait of a dethroned Monarch whose fall has influenced in no slight degree the whole course of subsequent events, combined with a picture of contemporary life in Turkey, more candid, perhaps, than any which has yet, in a reign of Terror, found courage for utterance, or skill for delineation. The writer of this record was, in fact, an eye-witness of many of the scenes which he describes; a man who shared in the hopes and fears of those eventful months. He has had unusual opportunities for a

graphic and true account of events which are practically unknown in the west of Europe. Nor are the main facts of the story less novel. At this very moment it is widely believed in Turkey that the EX-SULTAN MURAD is a dead man; and to many the present volume will prove the first revelation of the fact that ABDUL HAMID has still a living rival, before whose claims to the throne he can only appear as a traitor and an usurper.

It is, therefore, with some confidence that the publishers of this work invite for it the serious attention, not only of the general public, but also of those upon whose action the development of events is more directly dependent. For they believe that, by its promulgation, they may be enabled to throw a side light upon one of the most perplexing and insistent problems of the day.

PATERNOSTER HOUSE,
CHARING CROSS ROAD,
November, 1895.

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SULTAN MURAD V

CHAPTER I.

THE dark records of Turkish history cannot furnish us with a drama more sombre or more tragic than that which has been played around the personality of the gentle and ill-fated Murad V. Never has fatality shown itself to be more brutal, never has history offered us a more cruel deception, nor hope mocked us with more cruel irony than in the case of the unfortunate captive who is now expiating his brief months of reign in a State prison. Suddenly struck down in the zenith of his career, progress has lost her only chance of being incarnated in a chief whose breadth of intelligence and wide sympathies might have saved the country from the inevitable ruin which now hangs

over it. The cause of humanity and progress which he had set up so high has been trampled under foot, and the popular spirit which had shot up into a blaze under his fanning, has smouldered away in dust and ashes.

For nineteen years past the history of the ex-Sultan Murad V. has been wrapped in night and silence. Isolated from all his friends, impotent to prevent their exile or their death, deprived of the old and faithful servants of his childhood, the legitimate Sultan of the Ottomans passes his sorrowful days in the humble Kiosk of Yeldiz Park, in the almost solitary confinement, to which he has been condemned by order of his younger brother, Abdul Hamid II.

Méhémed Murad Effendi was born on September 21st, 1840. His mother was a Circassian of great beauty, and it is certainly from her that he inherited the pure outline of his face and features. Murad's expression was intellectual, but the large sentimental eyes, the delicacy of the physiognomy, its extreme benevolence, and

womanly gentleness, the air of melancholy and irresolution which hung about him like a garment, bespoke a serious lack of will and virility.

Murad has no longer the youthful appearance of the portrait given in this work. His long years of captivity, and the violent emotions through which he has passed have whitened his hairs and wrinkled his forehead. But while the rare beauty of his face and its fascinating loyal expression remain unaltered, his features are stamped with a new grace of manliness and fortitude. His mind, far from having given way under trial, has been strengthened, and has acquired a philosophic calm.

Constantinople, the theatre of this tragic drama, presents, first of all, a most strange and incomprehensible aspect. Its superb beauty without, its filthy streets within; the gardens and yalis of the rich, the squalid hovels of the poor; the dark cypress trees, with their Moslem graves beneath; the white minarets, emblems of a so-called living faith; the Christian churches, Greek, Roman,

Anglican; the newly-built palaces, the ruined aqueducts and mouldering walls; the rival continents, Europe, the practical, the progressive, Asia, the unknown and the mysterious, with its wooded mountains and wild animals, its solitary plains, the home of so many extinct civilizations, and possibly the last refuge of the once proud and victorious Osmanli: all these contrasts and surprises fill the mind with wonder and confusion.

And how much more striking are the contrasts and surprises of its moral physiognomy: anarchy and disorder, which are neither Asiatic nor European, yet both at once; ambition, intrigue, Western progress and Oriental prejudice, the past protesting against the present, civilization against barbarism, Western energy against Turkish apathy; an absolute monarch, whose pleasure and caprice are sacred and cannot be touched by law, a dozen nationalities, European and Asiatic, never fused with their conquerors, both ignorant, and consequently hating each other, and all these

things jostling against one another in a chaos of disorder without parallel. But stranger still were the events to which all these discordant elements were to give birth at the time when the ill-fated Murad was called to power.

In order that the character and aspirations of the Prince at that time may be understood, it is necessary to repeat a conversation which took place between him and one of his most intimate friends, Dr. S——, a partisan of the Young Turkey party, to whose house Murad, having eluded the vigilance of the guards by whom he was surrounded by order of his jealous uncle, repaired on the night of April 29th, 1876.

As Murad advanced to meet his host, his face brightened, a smile rose to his lips and a sweet vivacious expression to his eyes.

"My programme," he said, in answer to Dr. S——'s question, "is not changed. My first step will be to put a stop to the robbery of the finances and the corruption which has eaten into all our administrations."

"But what will the Pera shopkeepers

say," asked the Doctor, laughing, "and the ladies of the harem? And what will become of that tribe of adventurers, swindlers, and mountebanks who have been feeding and battening on the palace? Will you dare to stop the orgies of the pashas and cut down the taxes of the peasants?"

"That is my intention. And then," continued the Prince, "I am trying to seize the spirit of the different constitutions in Europe, and afterwards to choose, without distinction of race or creed, the men who are most fit to aid me in my projected reforms. I shall continue the work begun by my dear father, and which my uncle in his blindness has so hindered. I shall strive to put my people on the path of progress which other nations have trodden since the days of our decline. How Turkey has slept the sleep of the middle ages during the last two centuries, and how other nations have advanced! How she has borrowed the vices of the people she has conquered, and lost the manliness and honesty which made her conquer! Ah, my poor country, you do not see

that a new sun has risen on the horizon, flooding with light those races whose looks have been turned towards it. This sun," continued Murad, more and more excited by his enthusiasm, "is the spirit of progress. It is the human spirit, always active, always pregnant, a spirit which presses towards the future, urged on by a love of all that is beautiful, all that is good, all that is useful."

"Your Highness's sentiments do honour to your head and your heart. But have you calculated on the tenacity with which the Old Turks cling to their belief which makes their hatred of the Giaours a virtue?"

"I have. My task will be a hard one, but no matter. I am willing to spend my energies for my country; if need be, to die for her." And as he spoke his features trembled with excitement and his eyes filled with tears. He realized the enthusiasm of a martyr. Could he bear the pains of martyrdom?

"After all, Prince, your subjects are not wholly Mussulman."

"And if they were, would they be in the

right? Who knows? Which is the true religion? Dr. S——, you believe that Jesus was a God. What was he for the Jews? And for us? And what is the history of the three religions—a succession of wars and massacres. Are they purer than Buddhism, whose annals are unstained by bloodshed, and whose precepts teach devotion and charity?"

"Christianity," replied his friend, "is essentially the religion of progress. It was its founder who taught us those very ideas of progress which you so eloquently advocate."

"I know—I know. The Gospel is admirable; the words and sufferings of Christ have brought tears to my eyes. But I have been educated in another belief. Between so many, so many revelations, I hesitate. Which of us is deceived? Which of us has the truth? I am ignorant, and I seek to know. Two things I believe in and two things I will maintain—justice and liberty of conscience. Let us put an end to all this violence and cruelty and fanaticism, leave each religion free, let reason reign, and then we shall see

that all the mists of error which spring from self-interest and political self-seeking will melt away under the sun of toleration, and the truth which came from heaven will spread itself, like the grain of mustard seed in your parable, which, from the smallest of all herbs, grew into a mighty tree and covered the earth with its branches. My task is to put an end to all this bigotry which surrounds us, and to be kind and merciful to all. And then, I hope, that as all classes mix more and more together, out of mutual knowledge will spring mutual love and toleration. The new generation which has sprung up is already far advanced on the path of progress and liberality; the next may see the entire extirpation of all that is harsh, all that is cruel, in our midst."

"Inshallah! Perhaps, too, it will see the emancipation of women."

"Their slavery," answered Murad, "is a legacy which the Greeks left us. Nowhere in the Koran is woman treated with disrespect. But all this surveillance, this confinement, these latticed windows, these veiled

faces, began with the taking of Constantinople, and have grown worse and worse with time. No, no," he added, with a playfulness which shot out now and then fitfully in his conversation, "if a woman has a pretty face, the more we see of it the better. Far from exciting sensuality, it has exactly the opposite effect."

"Your Highness has been fortunate in having a father who has given his son such just ideas."

"Ah, my father! When will Turkey find such another ruler? Even you cannot tell the good he has done in repressing violence and crime. Before his time the harem was a hell of feminine rivalries, poisoning, and assassination. If he had lived he would have emancipated women from yashmaks and the society of degraded eunuchs. My first care on coming to power shall be to abolish them. They are an outrage on society and an insult to Europe. You cannot think," continued Murad, "what sadness and disgust seize me in the midst of the harem. The abject submission of the women kills love in its germ.

The most crass ignorance and coarseness prevail in their conversation and their pleasures. It is partly," he added, with a sigh, "to escape from these ennuis and other troubles that I have acquired my unfortunate taste for wine and strong drinks."

"How strange it is," remarked Dr. S——, "that you should have escaped to so great an extent from the temptations which beset young Turkish princes."

"That, again, I owe to my father. At a very early age he withdrew me from the harem."

"And yet you, who fascinate every one, must have fascinated the women."

"I will tell you," answered the Prince, laughing, "what happened to me at fourteen. I always loved carpentering, and one day, as I was making a box, I heard the rustling of a robe. My hands stopped, my heart beat, and, with an indescribable feeling of fascination, I heard the door creak open. Then, with a smile on her lips, a young and beautiful Circassian, dressed in silks, entered the room. She advanced with graceful step and

bearing, and without the least embarrassment, sat down beside me. It was the first time that I ever was so near a strange woman. I know not what laughing images of the Koran danced through my head, but I was confused, and could not speak. Perceiving my trouble, the Circassian said to me, 'Effendim, leave your puerile occupation and let us profit by the half hour in which we are thrown together. No one can disturb us; the eunuch is near, and he will keep away importunate people.' But this amorous parley, instead of firing my blood, froze it completely. I had always dreamt of love under a pure and modest form, and the effrontery of the odalisque only filled me with indignation."

CHAPTER II.

AFTER the strong rule of Sultan Mahmud, to whom human existence was only a game of bloodshed, succeeded that of the wise and sympathetic Abdul Mejid, whose large and pregnant ideas, thwarted though they often were by the ignorance or prejudice of his highest functionaries, and only partially carried out, yet did much to soften the brutality of Turkish diplomacy and Asiatic barbarism. But he was followed by the coarse and uncultivated Abdul Aziz, whom fear alone prevented from utterly undoing the work of his predecessor. But the deposition of this brute, an event looming in the distance, seemed destined to usher in a new era of happiness for Turkey. The next heir to the throne, Prince Murad, had a still larger share of the love of humanity and progress which had distinguished his father.

Never seemed the hopes of the empire so bright. Never again will Turkey find a chief so liberal, or so fitted, for emancipating her from fanaticism and superstition, or for promoting the most absolute tolerance among the strange agglomeration of races grouped around the throne. But never was so hard a task entrusted to so weak a will. Murad's previous life and habits, the brutality and ambition of his ministers, the bigotry of the Old Turks, the intrigues of Russia, were all against him. On the other hand, he had on his side the sympathies of Europe and the support of the cleverest Turkish statesman of the time.

From an early age Murad had been trained for the high destiny which awaited him. His father, who preferred him to his younger brother, Abdul Hamid, assisted in his dear "Muraddin's" education, and sought in every possible way, not merely to develop his intellect, but to instil into his heart those sentiments of justice, patriotism, and benevolence, which he himself possessed in so large a degree. Abdul Mejid

flattered himself that his son would continue the work of reform begun by Sultan Mahmud, and by the help of God, restore, in a more pacific manner, the glory and prosperity of the empire.

Murad at first sight seemed admirably fitted for this grand rôle. Nature had in many respects been kind to him. He had a breadth of intelligence, and a kindness of heart which no Turkish ruler, not even his father, had possessed. Impressionable, docile, patient, quick at seizing new ideas, he had profited largely by his liberal education. He learnt first of all to read Turkish, and became a good writer in that language. He even wrote poetry, of which some delicate and elegant specimens still exist. He also studied Turkish history, and mastered geometry, drawing, and French; he could read English, and he ardently admired Shakspeare and other English writers. Thus far Fortune had been kind to him, but there she stopped. His father died while his son was still young, and the possibilities of will-power, never very strong in the latter, were left undeveloped.

His mother, who was weak and short-sighted, handed him over to the care of a Neapolitan quack, who had gained her confidence by adulation and flattery, just at the critical period when her boy's character was not yet formed, and when he could easily have been trained up to a life of sobriety and austerity. But, left to his own caprices by his unconscientious mentor, Murad began to show symptoms of exaggerated sensibility, and a tendency to melancholy, which was fostered by his morbid and excessive passion for music. He used to compose soft melancholy airs, which nursed in his imagination a presentiment of a sombre and cruel destiny, and he would sit for hours at his piano, absorbed in reveries which fascinated, while they enervated his mind. Worse still, wearied by his captivity, oppressed by the malignant jealousy of his uncle, and haunted by the terrors of a sudden and violent death, he sometimes strove to drown his terrors in more material intoxicants. And thus, by a double indulgence, he weakened the springs of a soul, which a stern and conscientious

training, aided by the fine and supple cunning of a model Grand Vizier, would alone have enabled to struggle against a Turkish oligarchy, and the reaction, open or hidden, of the past against the future.

The other side of Murad's character was nearly perfect. He was always affable, affectionate, and calm of temper. He spoke on all subjects, struck out doubts, asked searching questions. He held the most advanced ideas on politics and religion. Absolute toleration was his motto, and what he most desired was to free the empire from dogmatism. Failing to get a draft of a constitution prepared, he tried to produce one himself, but could not succeed. What, indeed, is there in an Oriental to express Western ideas of liberty? Had he sacrificed the study of Eastern philosophy, which only leads to contemplation, to that of legislation, he might have answered the questions he was always putting: What is justice? What is the best means of acquiring it?

The best proof of Murad's amiability

was that his irascible uncle could not help living on a good understanding with him —for some time, at any rate; but, at last, Abdul Aziz, whose sick imagination judged Murad by himself, grew suspicious that Murad was persuading his father to change the succession in his favour. One of his train, however, who was not frightened out of his wits by the fury of Aziz, had the courage to say,—

"Why does not your Highness demand from Prince Murad an explanation of his conduct?"

"Go to him," cried the angry savage, "and express all the indignation I feel."

But Murad, on receiving the message, repudiated the charge with loyal frankness: "My uncle astonishes me," he said, "let him dispel his doubts. He ought to have judged me better after having known me these twenty years. Tell him, if he still suspects me, to have me put under arrest until he has girded on the sword of Osman after the death of my father, for whom every Turk (and my uncle most assuredly) prays to Allah that

his days may be lengthened for long years to come."

The delicate irony was lost on Aziz, but the spirited answer reassured him, and even touched his coarse spirit.

CHAPTER III.

If Abdul Mejid was the pioneer of Turkish progress, Abdul Aziz was its assassin. The former knew how to love, the latter only knew how to hate. Fantastic, capricious, selfish, exacting, with no elevation of character, no wish to improve his people, Aziz had inherited his Kurdish mother's native ferocity, and her coarse and ruthless spirit, which was fostered and grew rapidly under her education. She laughed when she saw her little savage, then five years old, tear a live pigeon to pieces for his amusement, and, when at the age of fifteen, he repeated the process with a young Bulgarian girl who had disdained his advances, she applauded her "young lion" for his high spirit. Abdul Aziz at matured age did not belie the promise of his youth. The reign of this oriental Caracalla is a record of atrocities and mis-

rule. He had no taste for study, no capacity for diplomacy. He changed Abdul Mejid's stage into an amphitheatre, where slaves in sleeping postures were torn to pieces by wild dogs. He shot a Bulgarian who had the audacity to look at him while hunting. He made away with a young Greek girl who rejected his overtures, and perpetrated every species of imbecility, and indulged in every extravagance which could help to ruin an empire.

Abdul Aziz, on his accession, forgot all the promises he made to Murad while the father of the latter was alive. He never felt at ease, at least while Murad was at liberty. He sent the prince away into the country, ostensibly for his nephew's pleasure; in reality to isolate him, and later, to keep him in permanent confinement. Devoured with secret distrust, he took him for a voyage on the imperial yacht. But, on their return, the suspicions of the tyrant broke out with fresh violence, and he kept his nephew under arrest for three months, till the prince protested. "Ha!" he exclaimed, "he finds

my orders unjust, he shall be taught not to murmur; let him be confined for a year in the palace." To all his captive's remonstrances he turned a deaf ear.

Aziz was compelled to take Murad with him on the occasion of his famous voyage to Western Europe, but he wished to send him back. Fuad Pasha energetically protested. "The sovereigns of Europe know that the two sons of Abdul Mejid are travelling with your Majesty. They will never be able to understand why the heir presumptive has been left behind." Obliged to give way, the hatred of Aziz to Murad became intensified; all the more so, as every European sovereign—Napoleon III., the King of Prussia, Queen Victoria—praised Murad's tact and taste, and showed more deference to him than to his own son, Youssef Izzedin. The Turkish potentate regarded their courtesies towards Murad with secret envy, and muttered, as he rolled his eyes jealously at the young prince, "What can they see in that double-faced Murad? Let them flatter him. He shall pay for it when we see Turkey once more."

Poor Murad had indeed to expiate his success. His seclusion became harder; he was not allowed to go out, except in a closed carriage. No one was admitted to the prince. He was forbidden to attend all fêtes and ceremonials, and at the Selamlik figured the petulant Youssef Izzedin, who was made chief of the army. And Murad's position was made all the more insupportable in consequence of his being continually surrounded by spies.

Urged on by his rapacious mother, and the intrigues of the Russian ambassador Ignatieff, who foresaw the commotion which such an event would stir up, Abdul Aziz tried again and again, on each anniversary of his coronation, to change the succession. Each time his pusillanimity recoiled before some new obstacle. Now it was a remonstrance from the English ambassador, now a refusal of the Sheik-ul-Islam to promulgate a Fetva so contrary to the spirit of the *Cheriat* (religious law), now the circulation, privately or openly, of pamphlets exciting popular indignation against his intrigues. Frightened

by the growing public resistance, mortified by repeated failures, and devoured by rage and jealousy, he became more and more tyrannical. He lost his taste for gluttony, swindles on 'Change had no more charms for him, and even the spectacle of slaves hunted to death by savage hounds gave him no pleasure. One absorbing thought gnawed at his heart and deprived it of rest—that Murad, the gentle, the loved, should, after all, reign and govern; that another should give peace and happiness to his people, while his own reign would be execrated and hated, and his own son, his very likeness, proud, overbearing, pretentious, the ideal of a Turkish Sultan, should be put aside, was an unbearable thought.

After each check he met with he broke out into fresh paroxysms of rage, and his gestures and actions were those of a madman, so much so that his terrified attendants scarcely dared to approach him.

The Valide Sultana alone had influence over her son. This woman's presence and bearing never failed to subdue this wild beast.

She had the look of a sorceress, and a magnetic power in her large black eyes. Her face had a kind of savage beauty, and her figure was tall and commanding, but her mouth was cruel, and her expression hard and inexorable. Brought up in the sanguinary and merciless creed of her ancestors, accustomed to crime and violence from her youth upwards, without hope or moral foresight, she had learned only to believe in the strength which comes from force of will and unscrupulous action. Her Providence was the poisoned cup or the dagger's point.

The last proclamation of the Softas, which had cowed the Sultan's energy, had only roused the Valide to greater desperation, and she used all her energies to rally him from his despair. She persuaded Aziz to send for Murad, so that they might bring their united force to bear upon him, and persuade the Prince to give up his rights to the crown.

About the time when the heir presumptive was expected, she went into the room where her son sat, his face buried in his hands.

Modulating her voice to its most caressing accent, she addressed him: "What troubles you, my soul? why are you so unquiet?"

"How can I have an hour of quiet? Do you not see how Murad thwarts me at every turn? He has gained the affection of the people, and as much as he is loved by them, so is Youssef hated. No hope of changing their opinion. What serves it that I am Sultan? Youssef does not succeed me."

"Is that all?" answered the Valide scornfully. "If Murad stands between you and your peace, Murad must be provided for." She looked at him out of her pitiless eyes. "When you snatch the crown for Youssef, and snatch it you must, Murad must go, for Youssef will never be safe while his cousin is living."

"Murad is my nephew," said the Sultan irresolutely.

"There is no relationship between the heirs to an empire," retorted the Valide sternly. "Better that Murad should die than Youssef lose his kingdom."

"He spared me when his father was alive, nor did he seek to change the succession," answered the Sultan in the same irresolute voice.

"And the more fool he! The more unfit to govern! You are not like yourself. I do not recognize in you that young lion who tore the Bulgarian in pieces when she thwarted his will; and she was but a lamb beside this Murad, who is a very serpent in your path, which, instead of crushing, you avoid as if you were afraid of it."

"Mother, I tell you, I fear Murad; there is something in his loyalty and good faith that disarms me. Long ago I felt abashed for accusing him of intriguing for his own succession, and now, much as I hate him and envy his popularity, I cannot resolve to kill him."

"Nonsense! these qualms of yours might suit that old woman, Ruchdi, or the Sheik-ul-Islam. What is it, after all, that you would take away? A breath, a vapour, that comes one knows not how, and goes one knows not where. Whether it be a Bulgarian

maiden or Prince Murad, it is only a life." She paused. Then fixing her eyes on Abdul Aziz, as if she would magnetize him: "Choose! Empire is a bride which admits of no rivals. Either woo her boldly and sweep Murad out of your path, or confess at once that you are a coward."

The sweat rose on Aziz's forehead. "The risk is too great—revolution will be sure to follow. My crown and my life are at stake."

"Then stake them! Better to lose all than to fume and fret like a woman, while opportunity is passing away before your eyes, and power is drifting into the hands of that smooth-tongued Giaour, who bewitched all Europe into loving him, and hating Youssef. Don't deceive yourself. Don't trust in Murad. Once in power he will treat the cousin as you have treated the nephew; or worse, Youssef will be shut up in prison, where, on the first rumour of revolt in his favour, he will end his days by the sword or by poison. Come, Couzoum."[1] She changed

[1] Couzoum, my lamb, a Turkish term of endearment.

her harsh tone to one of persuasion. "Rouse yourself and act. Russia is on our side. Twenty thousand of her soldiers are ready to help us. You can wrest a Fetva from the Sheik-ul-Islam for proclaiming the succession of Youssef, and, if the Softas and the Greek rabble rise, the Russian bayonets will make short work of them. Shake off this irresolution, hear what Murad has to say. If he gives way, 'tis well. If not, go he must. But here he comes."

As the Prince entered, the Sultan turned an envious eye on him, then averted his gaze. The Valide greeted him with a smile which was contradicted by the hard expression of her eyes.

"Is it well with you, Prince?" asked the Valide.

Murad had but little of the wisdom of the serpent to which the Valide had just compared him. He had, indeed, a reckless bluntness of speech quite unoriental.

"How should it be well with me, Hanoum,"[1]

[1] *Hanoum*, lady.

answered he, "when I am confined, almost like a State prisoner, and surrounded by intrigues and conspiracies?"

Sultan Aziz half sprung from his seat on hearing these rash words, as if to strike the speaker, but quieted, by a look from his mother, he sat down.

"The empire is indeed greatly agitated, but I did not know," sneered the Valide, "that any intrigues were being stirred up in your interest. I did not know that you were sufficiently important—"

Murad's eyes flashed fire. "Your Highness will only make your heart harder by these falsehoods. Do you suppose," he burst out excitedly, "that I am ignorant of your schemes to change the succession? I know that you only seek a pretext for putting me to death."

The Valide's bold eyes lowered an instant at this bold accusation. But recovering herself, she replied sternly: "What pretexts? If we feared you we would put you to death at once. Fear rather for yourself, and dread to accept a sovereignty which fits

ill on the head of one who is a freethinker and despises the Koran. Resign your pretensions to the throne, which never can be occupied by an unbeliever, as you are. Then all will be well between us."

"How comes it, Hanoum, if you put your trust in the Koran, that you do not follow it? Why do you seek to change the succession in defiance of the religious law?"

The Kurdish blood of the Valide boiled over. She answered brutally: "Because the race of Abdul Mejid is played out. Instead of warlike rulers, it gives us a succession of imbecile and effeminate princes, who are fit for nothing but to give music lessons and build *yalis*. You, Murad, will never be fit to govern. Turkey wants a man, not a musician."

"Resign the crown, Murad, in favour of Izzedin," said Aziz, as suavely as he was able, "and you shall be rich and honoured."

"I will not resign the inheritance of my fathers. What wrong should I do to myself, what injustice to my brothers. After all I

had hoped to do, how I should loathe myself and be despised by my well-wishers if I made so weak a concession."

"And what do you hope to do?" sneered the Valide. "Can you change the order of things? Better men than you, Mahmud, stern of will, and inflexible in purpose, failed. Your own father failed, through weakness, and do you, who are weaker still, and as ignorant as a child, hope to succeed? Give up your right to a position for which your character unfits you, and resign yourself to your fate, which we will take care to make happy."

"If Fate will have me Sultan, Fate will crown me in spite of your efforts. This soliciting of yours cannot be good, for it only serves to strengthen your evil wishes and irritate you more against me."

"You refuse then?" she said, darting a black look at him.

"I swear as I live, I will never yield my rights to your grandson."

"Then, as I live," cried the Valide, in a paroxysm of rage, "I tell you that if your life

is dear to you, you had better change your resolution. You do not know me."

"I know you well," retorted Murad. "I am in your hands. Poison me, strike off my head. Do what you will, I will never change my resolution. Better death than dishonour, and so I leave you."

As soon as he was gone, the Valide, who had followed him with eyes of hate, turned to her son,—

"What do you think now of this precious plant you have reared? Had you known, you might have watered it with poison. Even now, it is not too late."

"I'll hear no more of this," exclaimed the Sultan. "Murad is my brother's son, and I will not have the weight of his blood on my head."

"What is to be done then? Events are marching forward so rapidly that there is no time to be lost. If Murad's mouth is not to be stopped, at least devise some means to render him powerless. Send him into banishment, or keep him a close prisoner at the palace, until the crisis has passed."

Aziz remained in gloomy thought a moment.

"Everything—everybody is against me. How can I fight against Fate?"

"By being a Fate to yourself. Be a man. Brave hostile diplomacy. Despise the threatenings of the Koran and the clamour of the cowardly mob. Then you will find that, instead of bowing before Fate, Fate will bow before you."

"I will consult the astrologer. He has more than mortal knowledge. He can tell me whether the time is propitious or not."

The Valide's lip curled scornfully as she heard her son's decision, but she did not answer.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILE Aziz was plotting against his nephew, the empire, tossing between anarchy and despotism, was threatened with sudden shipwreck. The experienced pilots, Ali and Fuad, had left the ship, and there was no one to replace them. The destructive agencies which had been at work since the Crimean war; the huge loans which had loaded the empire with debt; the Russian interference in the internal affairs of the country; the provinces, bound hand and foot, and delivered over to the rapacity of the Pashas, had effectually disorganized the Government. Eight grand viziers had succeeded each other in rapid succession, the last of whom, the infamous Mahmud Nedim, was the slave of Russia. The overtaxed peasant could no longer meet the demands of the greedy Turkish officials, and

grim hunger and discontent reigned everywhere. There was no work in the capital. The workmen were starving. The bondholders received no interest, and the soldiers were not paid. The Young Turkey party was furious at having its representatives snatched away. The Old Turks were exasperated at the attempts to reverse the Koran and to change the succession, and diplomacy was disgusted at the Sultan's playing into the hands of Russia.

The various races of the Empire, for once, sinking their prejudices in their common peril, were at last roused to act. The Softas, ingenious in twisting the meaning of the Koran, met together in council, and sought to conjure away the danger by uniting with the Greeks, the Jews, and the Slavs. The Softas said to the Christians: "We are children of the same country. Why should we not live as one family? We wish for liberty, security, independence. Do you not wish the same? Are not our interests, our wrongs, the same? Are not Osmanlis, Greeks, Jews, Slavs, all

oppressed with the same burdens, and by the same oppression? Let us all demand the resignation of that arch-traitor, Mahmud Nedim."

These words were heard in every mosque. The Softas fraternized with the Greeks, and organized revolutionary measures. The conspiracy grew rapidly. Placards and remonstrances were posted at the doors of the Grand Vizier and the Sheik-ul-Islam. Thousands of Softas united together in the mosque, and a grand demonstration against the Sultan was organized.

The Sultan learned the designs of the Softas, and a great fear fell upon him, and his fear was deepened as the loud cries of the workmen of the arsenal reached him in the depths of his palace. Years back he would have repulsed them at the point of the bayonet, but now he dreaded lest they should return and swell the crowd of the Softas, whom it would be more difficult to disperse. The frightened potentate tried to temporize, but he only succeeded in quieting the rioters by an immediate promise to dismiss the

Grand Vizier and the Sheik-ul-Islam, and replace them by Midhat and Hairullah Effendi. But he did not elevate Midhat to the post of Grand Vizier. That would have displeased General Ignatieff too much, for the latter saw in Midhat a formidable adversary. So, to turn the difficulty, Ruchdi was made Grand Vizier, and Midhat President of the Council.

Ruchdi Pasha was rather attached to the Old Turkey party and its prejudices, but he was sagacious enough to see that reforms were needed, and ready to promise anything to keep matters as nearly as possible in *statu quo*. He was just the man fitted to calm popular anger. But he was far too pliant, too easy-going. He detested radical changes or vigorous action; he was averse to cruelty or bloodshed, and, in fact, he avoided anything which was likely to disturb that *dolce far niente* mood which is so becoming in a Turkish statesmen. He was commonly called the old woman, on account of his chronic cough and weeping eyes. The Sultan rejoiced to have such a minister; but

as the latter was not strong enough to act alone, he thought it wise, as a counterbalance, to appoint Hussein Avni, who was energy incarnate, as War Minister.

Hussein Avni was of Spartan origin. With all the rude energy of the descendants of Leonidas, he united the dashing courage and the tenacious valour of ancient Greece. When he came to Constantinople to seek his fortune, he became, first of all a student of theology, but soon found that the Church was not his vocation. Embracing a military career, he saw much active service in war, and afterwards became a diplomat. In both capacities he experienced the ups and downs of an Oriental career. He was dismissed, exiled, and finally recalled to be made Seraskier, or War Minister, under Ruchdi Pasha.

The new Seraskier's looks did not give the lie to his character. With a martial figure, his small, fierce black eyes, his rugged features and hard, domineering aspect, bespoke a soul full of impetuous courage and steadfast purpose, but void of pity or

sympathy; one of those rare types to whom men appeal in moments of danger, and whose ruthless nature shrinks from no crime to attain its object. *Au reste*, he was a Turk at heart, a bureaucrat, an ultra conservative, whose ideas never went beyond the circle of Mussulman theology, and whose narrowness of view unfitted him for the post of a legislator.

The Sultan flattered himself that he had escaped a great danger by his change of ministry. He had got rid of the counsellors who had encouraged his vices and follies. These were the scapegoats, he hoped, who would carry his sins away with them into the wilderness. By the aid of so strong a minister as Avni, he could effectually crush the revolution. And then, having got rid of that great danger, who, so well as his new Seraskier, could help him to carry out his cherished design of substituting Youssef for Murad? But a change was passing over the Sultan. His superstitions grew weaker as the dangers thickened around him, and his scruples were gradually giving way before the

sophistical arguments and the relentless will of the Valide. He was rapidly becoming reckless of consequences, or the fear of God or man. He determined to sound the War Minister. If he could gain him over to his cause he would act at once.

A few days after Avni's appointment, Aziz was awaiting his new minister, whom he had summoned with this intention ; but when the Valide entered she noted a look of dissatisfaction on her son's face.

"Well?" she asked.

"I have seen the astrologer," Aziz snapped out irritably. "For the twentieth time he says that the stars are not propitious."

She fixed a scornful look on him. "Is this your courage? Tell the slave you will hang him the next time the 'stars are not propitious.' You will get a favourable answer then."

Rebuked by her contempt, Aziz regarded his mother with an awed look. "You don't believe in astrology," he said fearfully.

"No more," she answered indifferently, "than I believe in the fables of the Koran. Our ancestors believed in the Devil and

worshipped him. The Turks believe in one God; the Christians in three. Which is right? Is any belief right?" Her eyes kindled fiercely. "I believe, and I always have believed, in the strong will, and the strong arm, which strikes down the foe in its path. The nearer in kinship, the harder would I strike. Well! now that you have a man, what are you going to do?"

Aziz regarded her uneasily.

"Still irresolute! Still that squeamish pity for Murad! Have you none for your own son? Ere I would let him wear out his life in fear or captivity, I would kill him with my own hands and free him from the chance of misery."

"Say no more. Woman, you drive me mad."

"But I will. Do you think if Hussein Avni had been in your place, he would have hesitated a moment?"

"Enough, enough," cried the Sultan angrily. "Here comes the man himself."

Avni entered and made his obeisance. He guessed why he had been summoned, but,

with a tact which all Turkish statesmen have in the face of danger, he suppressed his impetuosity, and made up his mind to listen with deference to what he was to hear.

The Valide smiled as she saw him. He had captivated her good graces. His resolute bearing, his inflexible aspect, were in sympathy with her own mood.

"We give you thanks, Avni, for the great care you have had of us," said the Valide. "This rabble of mongrels threatened our palace; but through your care and Ruchdi's no outbreak has occurred."

"My life and service are at your Majesty's disposal."

"There is no other statesman to whom we would so willingly confide the destinies of the empire as to you. Would there were more like you!"

"How is it, Avni," interrupted Aziz, "that this vile mob favours Murad, who is half a *Giaour*, and hates Youssef, who is a true son of Osman? That the Greeks should hate him, I understand, but the Turks! It is unnatural."

"Can I account, your Majesty, for the fickle humours of the mob?"

"Avni," said the Valide, "we like you. When the time comes you will find that we are not forgetful nor ungrateful, and that we will advance your interests." She looked him full in the face. "Will you serve ours? Murad must never come to power. He is a *Giaour*, and intends to overthrow the Turkish constitution, which you respect. Throw in your lot with us. Help us to change the succession in Youssef's favour. Russia is on our side. Twenty thousand men will be landed at a moment's notice, to check the outbreak of the mob, and, with your strong arm to help, we can make the change without disturbance or danger."

The Valide had touched the wrong chord. Avni was no theologian, and did not think much of the religious law, but, a Turk, patriot at heart, he could favour no scheme which suited Russia and Russian ambition. The one country which he especially hated was that greedy power, which was hovering, like a vulture, above the corpse of Turkey.

But his face was impenetrable. A veil seemed drawn over his black eyes, usually so fierce and impatient, as he answered calmly,—

"The time is hardly ripe, Hanoum, for such a scheme. Granting that a riot may be averted by the Russian troops, the Powers would at present be unfavourable to your project. It is known that England will send up her fleet to the Dardanelles if the Russians land."

"The Dardanelles will be closed," said the Sultan sharply.

"I fear, your Majesty, our fortifications are not strong enough to stop the English fleet."

"Am I not master in my house?"

"If once the Russians land," said Avni, evading a direct reply, "they will stir up an insurrection in the city, which will be backed up by our own troops."

"You mean to say then" (the Valide's eyes flashed as she spoke), "that you will not help us."

"By no means, Hanoum. I am not un-

grateful for your promises. I am not opposed to your ideas, but the moment is not opportune. Later on, when popular tumult has subsided, when the workmen and the soldiers have been paid, and the students are satisfied with the new reforms, all the city will be on your side, and then, by the help of God, you may see your way to your desire. In the meantime I will sound the members of the Council and hear what they have to say."

The Valide and the Sultan looked at their adviser—the latter moodily, the former steadily. But the Seraskier's face betrayed no emotion.

"'Tis well, Avni," said the Valide, "we thank you for your good counsel and will profit by it. When next we meet we will confer further."

The minister took his leave. Abdul Aziz and his mother regarded each other with a blank look of disappointment.

"What do you think of your War Minister now? Is he a man to be trusted?"

Aziz regarded the Valide in gloomy silence.

"Did you notice his secret look? No. You notice nothing."

"If he is with us," said the Sultan, puzzled, "why does not he join us in our plot?"

"Shall I tell you? Murad is to be nominal Sultan, but, in reality, a puppet in the hands of your well-beloved Avni, who will mould him like wax, and become the real dictator of the empire."

A look of fury rose in the Sultan's eyes. "If I thought so he should never have left the palace alive."

"'Tis pity he did."

CHAPTER V.

HAD the Sultan divined the resolution which was forming in the mind of his new minister during their interview, and which had thoroughly shaped itself when he left the palace, he would have shared his mother's regret. Hussein Avni, aware of the danger which hung over his head through having thwarted the despotic will of the Sultan and that of his still more despotic mother, lost no time in preparing his *contre coup*. Summoning to his presence two individuals—haggard, sinister-looking figures, of whose instrumentality he had made use on previous occasions and on whose courage he could rely—he appealed to their avarice and love of vengeance, and secured their assistance. These men had been implicated in the Cretan insurrection of 1866. Their farm had been burnt by the savage Turkish troops, their father had been

HUSSEIN AVNI PASHA

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executed by order of the Sultan, and they had become reckless and desperate. It was not difficult for Avni, who had been Marshal in Crete at that time, to convince them that he had no hand in the murder of their father, and that he had even interceded for him through Ali Pasha with the obdurate Sultan, who, deaf to his entreaties and to justice, had persisted in signing the death warrant. It required but little persuasive eloquence on Avni's part to persuade them to make common cause with him and to risk their lives on the chance of revenging themselves and making their fortunes. It was arranged that on the Friday following, when Abdul Aziz went to the Selamlik, that the Softas (theological students) should surround the Sultan and hustle him, when the bandits, profiting by the confusion, should get at and assassinate him. The ruffians consented. After the fashion of Greek bandits they laid their hands on the cross, kissed it with fervour, raised it to their foreheads, and swore a solemn oath that they would obey the Pasha to the death.

One of these men, however, after pocketing the big backsheesh he had received from Avni Pasha, went straightway to a friend of his at the palace, where the worthy pair got very drunk and confidential together. In fact, before he left, the brigand had coached his boon companion up in all the details of the plot, regarding which the latter swore with solemn drunken gravity to observe a profound secrecy. It seems, however, that he did not consider himself bound, in particular, by his oath. At any rate, the rage for backsheesh, so strong in palace officials, overcame his sense of honour, for the next morning he presented himself before the Sultan and repeated what he had heard.

Aziz listened, his eyes dilated with rage. Then, rewarding the informer, he hurried off to the Valide and communicated the intelligence to her, adding that her suspicions of Avni were too true.

A sudden idea darted through the Valide's brain.

"And Murad, what of him?" she asked, fixing a searching look on the Sultan.

"If I thought him guilty, I would strangle him with my own hands. But, no, it cannot be possible."

The Valide smiled contemptuously. "Suppose," she added, with an ominous emphasis in her voice, "suppose I were to bring you a witness who will repeat a certain conversation overheard between Murad and Avni?"

The Sultan started with amazement.

"Woman, thou liest, thou canst not have such a witness."

"Will you see him?"

"Let him be produced, and if he can convince me of a conspiracy, Murad shall die, were he forty times my nephew."

"And Avni?"

"Once let me have him inside the palace, his nails shall be torn out one by one until he confesses his treachery."

"Do so, my lion, and 'tis well."

It may easily be imagined that the unscrupulous Valide found no difficulty in producing a false witness, who repeated a fictitious conversation between the War

Minister and Murad, which so wrought on the Sultan that he made up his mind to put them both to death.

Avni did not know this, for the assassin did not think fit to inform him. But Avni was well aware that his evasion of the Sultan's proposal had given offence, and how such an offence was expiated. He therefore kept away from the palace.

CHAPTER VI.

BESIDES music, Murad had a taste for architecture. He used to say, "If I were not heir to the throne, I would be an architect," and when the dreaded Seraskier arrived at the farm, he found the Prince tranquilly engaged with his workmen in embellishing the house. As he turned round he saw the harsh features of Avni twisted into a scornful grimace. Murad winced.

With a martial salute, Avni broke out: "Is this a time, Prince, to occupy yourself with these things? Is this to be the dwelling of the future Padishah?"

"No, Avni, but the house will always be dear to me. I shall often come back to it to discourse with a past, of which the bitterness indeed will have ceased, but which I shall never forget, for fear of being dazzled with the splendour of my new fortunes."

"If I were to be Sultan," said Avni, "I should be ashamed to be so good an architect. But a truce to all this folly. Prince," he continued, still more abruptly, "a crisis is at hand. Your uncle, not content with having half ruined the empire, is about to make a last desperate attempt to change the succession, and sell his country to Russia. Your head and those of your brothers are in danger."

Murad turned a fearful eye towards his tormentor.

"Hasn't he ordered you and all your brothers to leave the farm, and take up your abode at his palace?"

"Yes, but we have refused to go."

"Does that matter? You will be forced. I suppose you haven't read Turkish history for nothing. Not one of you will leave the palace alive. Do you know that my life also is in danger for acting in your interest?"

"Has he sent for you then?"

"Yes—once—twice—thrice: most gracious invitations. Of course I refused; I

will not enter the den of this royal tiger. There are too many bones and fragments outside. Prince, a common danger threatens us. We must act, and act swiftly. Aziz must be dealt with promptly. All is arranged. Two desperate men, on whom I can count, have sworn to assassinate him at the Selamlik. We want nothing but your consent, and the thing is done."

But Murad shrank back from Avni, shuddering. "No, no, no! I will not hear of it. No attempt must be made on the person of my uncle. At the price of a murder, the throne would be odious to me."

"Then," retorted Avni grimly, "it is *you* who will be dealt with."

"Let them take my life," cried the Prince. "I would rather die than be a murderer." (Avni's face grew black.) "I will have no violence; no pretended reasons of State, no private considerations will induce me to commit a crime. No, no. Either a crown without remorse, or a death without dishonour."

"But that is not all. If you go, we lose

our chief. Russia will seize Constantinople —then good-night to Turkey. Is the welfare of your country nothing to you?"

"I do not believe Russia will succeed; the Powers will interfere."

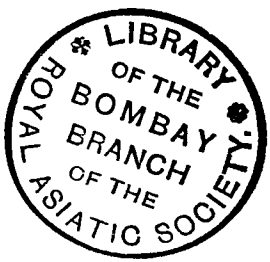
"Even then, that won't prevent you and your brothers from being butchered."

"Come what may," persisted Murad, "I will not consent."

"And my life, of course, is worthless," sneered Avni. ("Effeminate prince," he muttered to himself.) "If all I have said," he added aloud, "does not outweigh the life of a traitor and a tyrant, I will speak no more," and with a haughty salute he strode out of the room.

"Ouf," exclaimed Murad, "now he is gone I can breathe again. Horrid brute! He looked like a devil, when he spoke of assassinating my uncle. I have a wretched foreboding that he will do it. How can I prevent it? Cooped up here like a prisoner, dependent for daily news on my friends, surrounded by spies, I am less free than the meanest of our subjects. What perversity!

What untoward chance! Cursed be the folly of the Sultan which has brought me to this pass! Cursed be my fate which has thrust all this perplexity upon me!"



CHAPTER VII.

UNLIKE Murad, who rejected the stereotyped barbarism of Mahomet, Midhat's character was moulded on that of the cruel and selfish prophet of Islam, whom he somewhat resembled in strength of will, persuasive eloquence, and rare political capacity. But his foresight was too great, and he was far too deeply impressed by a study of the French Revolution not to modify his Mussulman ideas, and accommodate himself to the times. He aimed at establishing a constitution in Turkey, which would, so far as material progress was concerned, keep her on a level with Europe, and which would at the same time maintain Turkish privileges and traditions as much as possible.

But Midhat was a Moslem at heart. Brought up, like other Turks, in the harem, taught by his mother to lie and deceive, corrupted by the intrigues and scandal of the

MIDHAT PASHA

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hanoums, allowed to indulge all his caprices, to smoke, to gormandize, to cuff and bully the cringing domestics; never corrected, never checked; inoculated with the pride of caste and contempt of the *Giaours*, how was it possible with such an environment, and such inherited qualities, he could become aught else but a cruel and unscrupulous statesman, or that his career could be aught else but a history of denial of justice and Machiavellian policy?

Such was the man who waited on Murad, while the Prince was still tormenting himself and brooding over Avni's proposal.

Noting the Prince's perturbation, the acute statesman guessed the cause of it at once. He asked Murad if he had seen Avni.

"Yes, the brute!" exclaimed Murad excitedly. "He proposed to have my uncle assassinated. He fears assassination himself, and, like a man sliding over the edge of a precipice, he would drag the Sultan down to save himself."

"Are you not Padishah, or nearly so? Have you not forbidden it?"

"Yes, but will he obey? Midhat, I can bear this no longer. All this atmosphere of crime and intrigue will drive me mad. As it is I am sick of my life already."

"This is a big storm, Prince, and you are a very young sailor. But the thunder always growls loudest and the lightning flashes fiercest just before the storm subsides. What harm has Avni's proposal done you? You have not consented to it, nor will I, nor Ruchdi. And he will not dare to carry it out alone. And then, the stern administrator, whose mien is so very terrible to you, is the man we need for this crisis. His fierce energy and presence of mind will direct the popular outbreak and sweep away all obstacles in your path to the throne."

"If I am not swept away myself," said Murad dejectedly.

"You may sleep in peace, Prince. You are watched over. If you keep away from the palace, no harm shall happen to you. And the evil which your uncle is plotting against you has already recoiled on his own head. The people hate his rule, and now they

have found out that he conspires against one on whose advent such loyal thoughts are bent, the bolt will fall all the quicker. Mussulman and Rayah alike, the Softas, the Imams, the merchants, are all ready for revolt." Midhat paused and looked steadily at Murad. "Prince, will you put yourself at the head of this movement? Your co-operation will give fresh courage to your friends, and confirm their hopes of you."

Murad looked at his adviser uneasily. "But I promised the Sultan never to plot against him."

"To keep a promise," said Midhat, cynically, "is not a diplomatic virtue."

"All the worse for diplomacy."

"Has the Sultan ever kept a promise to you? Is he not even now plotting against you?"

"Midhat, my good friend, I know how much I am indebted to you. I know how wise and foreseeing you are. But how can I play fast and loose with my faith, and link a solemn oath with a conspiracy? Let Aziz plot against me; let him kill me, if it be

my fate. I will not be a traitor to my own sincerity."

Midhat mused a moment: Who would have thought that he would be so obstinate? "Prince," he said, aloud, "it is as useless to stop this popular movement, as to arrest the fall of an avalanche. Let us see what can be made out it, so as, if possible, to save the Sultan, and not to offend your scruples. We have with us enlightened Ulemas, who, without breaking with the Koran, have given it that large interpretation which the crisis requires, and they, in conjunction with the Christians, have drawn out an act in which, just as you wish it, 'absolute tolerance is accorded to all the religions of the Empire, and social equality is established among all its classes and races.'"

"Good! good!"

"This act will be submitted by the Grand Vizier to the Sultan. If he accept it and give solid guarantees for its being carried out, Prince Murad will be satisfied, for the reign of liberty, equality, fraternity, which he loves,

will be realized, and his uncle can reign in peace."

"All this I thoroughly approve of; but if he refuses?"

Midhat shrugged his shoulders. "In the case of rejection or subterfuge on his part, he must be deposed; one cannot arrest a whirlwind or check a popular revolution."

"But no violence; you promise me that, at least, Midhat."

"There will be none."

"You will keep me informed of the course of events?"

Midhat smiled. "Let your mind be at peace, Prince.'

CHAPTER VIII.

HUSSEIN AVNI was seated with the Grand Vizier, Ruchdi Pasha. The latter was staring at vacancy and smoking his tenth cigarette, and Avni had turned his regard a hundred times impatiently towards the door, when Midhat made his appearance.

"Well?" broke out Avni.

"He will not join us," said Midhat.

"What is to be done then?" said Ruchdi.

"We can expect nothing from this Prince," began Avni.

"Nor should you," interrupted Midhat quietly. "One does not usually choose a lap-dog to guard the sheep."

"It is the Veuve Cliquot that has ruined him," laughed Ruchdi.

"At all events, he is not fit to govern," exclaimed Avni harshly.

MEHEMET RUSHDI PASHA

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"And so much the better for us," rejoined Midhat. "Since the time that the Sultans have ceased to march at the head of their armies, and since the time that they have shut themselves up in their harems, they have become the slaves of their ministers, as this one will be. We shall have all the power in our own hands."

"You have not got it yet," said Ruchdi. "Why cannot we keep this Sultan in power, and get him to make reforms?"

"Get tears from the dead man's eye," answered Midhat contemptuously. "Go to him, if you will; prostrate yourself before him, and say, 'My Padishah, you are the shadow of God, and can do no wrong. If it be your will to decorate fighting-cocks and spend the revenues of five provinces on your harem and eunuchs; if it be your will to change the succession in favour of Prince Youssef Izzedin, let your will be done.' But do not ask him to make reforms. He is past management."

"And getting desperate," added Avni. "I did but ask him to defer his intrigues until

calmer times, and he turned an eye of death upon me. All our remonstrances will be repaid by the benevolent cup of coffee or the bowstring."

"If a man has an enemy," said Midhat, very quietly, "he does not warn him of his hostile intentions, but he lulls his foe into security. The mole works in silence and in darkness. Let us lull the vigilance of the palace by inviting the Softas to send in at once an address professing their loyalty to the Sultan. But none the less can the secret committees go on with their work of reform. Let them make out a constitution which will embrace a parliament."

"I do not like the idea," interrupted Avni. "I despise all that wretched mob of Giaours and Rayahs. If we are Turks let us hold our heads above these infidels and keep our privileges. I believe in an oligarchy. I do not believe in radical reforms. Let Turkey have a good army and a good navy, and she can stand alone."

Ruchdi nodded his approval at each sentence, "Quite right, quite right."

Midhat soliloquized: Let Avni accomplish his task. Let that old woman, Ruchdi, assume all the apparent responsibility. My patient ambition will find my path swept before me, and it will be fully satisfied at last. I alone have the faculty for government, and all power will come to me eventually.

"But what must we do now?" said Ruchdi. "The empire is on the point of ruin."

"Yes," replied Midhat, "the European Powers are thoroughly distrustful of our capacity for government, and dictate to us as if we were children."

"The Sultan's suspicions, too, are aroused," said Avni. "He has noticed the movements of the troops in the neighbourhood of the palace, and the naval manœuvres on board the ironclads. Several times he has sent for me to the palace, but," he added with a grim smile, "I was unwell, and could not go."

"Has Ignatieff been to the palace to-day?" asked Midhat.

"Yes," responded Avni.

"Ah! I will give you his programme,"

said Midhat. "Curtain rises. First Act. Insurrection in Herzegovina. Servia and Montenegro preparing for war. Second Act. Greeks and Roumanians coming to the rescue. Third Act. Czar throws off the mask. The Bosphorus for Russia, Holy Russia, the symbol of orthodoxy and liberty. The Sultan to his palace at the Seraglio. The Sheik-ul-Islam chosen by the Czar to carry out his orders and dictate to the humble Mussulman. Russia to be master of the Mediterranean. The Panslavist hordes to swoop down on Trieste. Later, India to be snatched from the English. Of course, his scheme includes the protection of his sacred Majesty the Sultan by 20,000 Russians, who may land here at any time."

Avni frowned like a thunder-cloud as he listened. "All the more reason to act at once."

"If the Sultan gets wind of our conspiracy," coughed Ruchdi, "the bowstring or the Bosphorus for us," and his eyes rolled fearfully.

"You may be sure that Ignatieff's spies have knowledge of it," said Avni.

"Hear me," exclaimed Midhat, "and I will show you a way to pluck safety from the very jaws of danger. First, I have got a Fetva for the deposition of the Sultan from the Sheik-ul-Islam."

"No! How did you get it?" exclaimed Ruchdi.

Midhat smiled rather contemptuously at his colleague with the weeping eyes. "It appears you do not know our new Sheik. He is an ambitious prelate, who, to serve his own ends, would pass the Koran through the eye of a needle, or give the sanction of the *Cheriat* (religious law) to the act of independence of the United States, to the doctrine of the *Contrat Social.* He knows well all the cross currents of the Bosphorus, and can steer his bark in them securely. Here is the Fetva." He produced the document and read,—

"'If the Commander of the Faithful acts like a madman; if his political knowledge is defective; if his personal expenses are such

as the nation cannot support; if his maintenance on the throne will result in disastrous consequences; ought he, or ought he not, to be dethroned? The *Cheriat* says—Yes!

"'Signed, the Sheik-ul-Islam,

"'HAIRULLAH EFFENDI,

"'on whom may God have mercy.'"

"*Mashallah*," cried Ruchdi.

"Now to my proposal," continued Midhat. "The ignorant and fanatical mob are entirely ruled by their chiefs, and the soldiers and sailors will obey them without a murmur. All things work together in our interests. A popular revolution does not suit you, Avni. We will change it into a military one, and, what is more important, hurry it forward by thirty-six hours. Neither the Sultan nor General Ignatieff will expect such an advance. We will surround the palace this very night, and send Abdul Aziz Effendi an Irade, from the new Sultan, Murad V., that he must quit the palace at once."

"Will the new Sultan give it?" asked Ruchdi.

"What does that matter?" said Avni. "We will give it ourselves."

"Shall we let the Prince know our intentions?" demanded Ruchdi.

"No," replied Avni, with decision. "Keep him in the dark altogether. When the decisive moment arrives, I will force him to show himself to the people."

"I do not like all these changes. Let us give the Sultan another chance of reforming," pleaded Ruchdi.

"What do you want us to do?" broke out Avni fiercely. "Shall I go to the Padishah and prostrate myself before him, and say, 'My Padishah, do not be angry with your slave. If I did not repair to the palace at your order, it was because I did not wish to excite the suspicions of Ruchdi and Midhat, with whom I pretended to be plotting, in order to find out their real designs. Now I have followed them, step by step, I am able to disclose all their secrets to you?'"

"Do not speak of such a thing, even in joke," said Ruchdi, shuddering. "I give

way. If it is Abdul Aziz's fate to be deposed, deposed he must be."

"How cold Prince Murad is in great affairs," remarked Avni, "how full of foolish pity! He cannot see that, were it not for our prompt action, the Sultan would assuredly sweep him out of his path. Even when deposed he is dangerous, for he has adherents still, who, sooner or later, will seek to restore him to power. He must be got rid of."

"We need a decent pretext to do it," said Midhat musing.

"Do not let us wait for a pretext," rejoined Avni fiercely, "but let us slay him at once. By the sword, by poison, sleeping or waking, all's one, provided it be done quickly."

Midhat turned his crafty eye on his colleague. "Did not Abdul Aziz once attempt suicide during a temporary fit of insanity? He did. Ah, well! As you have charge of his welfare, you will, of course, be careful that the dethroned monarch be not irritated into a fresh attack." An ironical smile played across his lips as he spoke.

The eyes of the two conspirators met.

A heinous crime rose in those of Avni, who understood the subtle hint of his co-worker in iniquity.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSTANTINOPLE no longer looks itself in the gaudy sunlight. Railways, trams, advertisements, the bustle and hurry imported from the West, have destroyed much of its picturesqueness and Oriental character. But at night it is still an enchanted city. The round domes and slender minarets, like the helmets and lances of giant warders, the dark masses of cypress trees, the fantastic assemblage of architecture, rising ghostly and indistinctly from the moonlit sea beneath, thrill the imagination with a sense of beauty and wonder. Fancy runs riot, and conjures up visions of turbaned Turks, bright-eyed houris with soft, languishing voices, of Orientals gay in silk and gold, of beauteous sultanas reclining beside marble fountains, while the air is faint with the odour of jasmine and roses. But as the eye roves over the sleeping city, and memory recalls its past history, all these

voluptuous associations, born of night and moonlight, give place to harsher, yet not less romantic realities. Yonder is the blood-stained Hippodrome and Santa Sophia, so redolent of crime and Turkish misrule, further off lie the Seven Towers with their records of cruelty and pining captives, while near at hand is the dark Seraglio Point, with its mysteries of passion and crime: the vision rises of a boat filled with dark figures pulling out into the current, the glimmer of a white dress, a slight movement, a splash, then a woman's shriek ringing through the still air.

But these illusions, this atmosphere of rest and beauty, all these tragic associations of the past, did not occupy the minds of the inhabitants of Pera at this time. Their thoughts were entirely absorbed with the prospect of a tragedy in the present. For General Ignatieff had profited by the opportunity afforded him by the political crisis, and his agents had industriously spread the report that the gloom and irritation shown by the Young Turkey party,

and the open insolence displayed by the soldiers and common people towards the *Giaours*, were the heralds of an uprising of the followers of Mahomet, and a general massacre of the Christians.

It was very curious that this panic was communicated to the Turks of Stamboul also. There was a reciprocity of dread on either side of the Golden Horn. Rumour, swift and lying everywhere, was especially active with the cowardly and gossiping spirit of the cosmopolitans. It sent its couriers through Pera, Galata, and Stamboul, with more than telegraphic speed. Surmises, exaggerations, forebodings, were carried from house to house and mouth to mouth, till at last their fearful imaginations bodied forth all these airy nothings into palpable and terrible shapes. The strangest stories found credence, doubt was changed to conviction, and possibility into certainty. As in diseases, many symptoms make up a sign, so all these fears resolved themselves into a real panic. A general massacre was to take place; how, when, and where, were

the only points not quite settled in their troubled brains.

While rumour was thus busy with the gossiping and cowardly Pera folk, flattering General Ignatieff's Slavonic imagination with the promise of Constantinople, and bidding him sleep in peace till the 31st of May, the conspirators were advancing the hands of the clock by thirty-six hours, and preparing a military revolution which was to come to pass at once. This, of course, was unknown to the cosmopolitans. The day-dreams of fear and slaughter which had haunted their waking thoughts resolved themselves into strange and terrible combinations when sleep fell upon them. Had the visions of the sleepers assumed palpable shapes, the city would have been alive with phantoms. What exaggerated creations, what spectres, born of guilty conscience, what scenes of pillage and slaughter must have passed through their troubled brains: hurrying tumultuous crowds, bloodthirsty assassins, darkness and waving torches, cruel Moslems with fierce Asiatic eyes, and faces hideous with lust and

carnage, flying figures dabbled with blood, the flash of knives, the shrieks of women, and wild appeals for mercy.

What did the sleeping monarch at Dolma-Bagtche dream about? Whatever passed through his moody soul, whatever thoughts of murder, of fair Circassian girls, of sumptuous feast, no vision of the *coup d'état* presented itself to him. Ignorant of the coming danger, confiding in the protection of Ignatieff, he had gone to rest in perfect security. Had he known, he would probably have taken refuge on board the Russian despatch-boat. But Ignatieff, in spite of his spies, was ignorant as well. He expected the plot to be carried out on the night of the 31st, and his vigilance, active as it was, had been out-manœuvred by the rapid action of the conspirators.

Indeed, their sudden change of front had been so adroitly managed, it had been organized with such silence and rapidity, that it fell on the whole city like a thunderbolt. Everything was in its favour. The Sultan was almost universally execrated. He had no friends to warn him of his danger, apart

from those favourites whom Avni had judiciously removed from their posts and sent to Asia. The soldiers and sailors regarded their chiefs with confidence and esteem. Avni and Kaiserli had entire control over the army and fleet. Towards midnight the troops fell into their ranks on the heights above the palace, where they had been equipped as for a campaign against Bulgaria. Swollen by the cadets of Pancaldi, under Suleiman of the Shipka Pass, they marched quietly downwards towards the palace. Their figures were invisible in the darkness, and their measured tramp, if not drowned by the noise of the wind, might have passed for the monotonous splash of the Bosphorus waves against the shore. Simultaneously with this movement, the ironclads of Kaiserli Pasha took up their stations in front of the palace, while some light steamers hovered close in, so as to prevent the possibility of a caique slipping out of the watergate, and creeping along the shore towards Beshiktach. No sooner had the soldiers reached Dolma-Bagtche than

they completely surrounded the palace, while the young cadets forced their way in and barred the doors against all egress. All this was accomplished mysteriously and silently.

It was two o'clock in the morning of the 29th of May when Redif Pasha, instructed by the terrible Seraskier, made his way into the palace. Going straight to the harem, he knocked loudly. The chief of the eunuchs, awakened from his sleep, rubbed his eyes and thought he was dreaming. Knock—knock—knock.

"Who knocks at this hour?" he squeaked out irritably.

"It is I—Redif Pasha. Open—open—quick!"

The eunuch obeyed trembling. Redif, without further parley, ordered him peremptorily,—

"Wake Abdul Aziz at once. Hand him this Irade from Sultan Murad V. Your master must leave the palace with all his wives and effects at once, and take up his abode at Top-Capou."

The eunuch, still trembling, protested:

"He is sound asleep. I dare not wake him."

"You will wake him—and at once—you black dog."

Without another word the eunuch hurried off.

Abdul Aziz was sleeping profoundly when the eunuch entered, and was aroused with difficulty. He half rose on his bed and looked round wildly.

"What is it?" he asked roughly. Then as he looked more attentively at the eunuch, whose teeth were chattering with fear, he repeated the question with rising anxiety.

"May it please your Majesty," said the eunuch in a faint squeaky voice, "there is a disturbance outside the palace—and—here is a paper."

"A paper?" exclaimed the Sultan, turning pale.

"It is an Irade."

"A what?"

"An Irade from the new Sultan Murad V."

"Irade! Murad! Sultan! Are you mad?"

"May it please your Majesty," said the

eunuch, whose words were scarcely audible with fear, "you must quit the palace and go to Top-Capou."

"Quit the palace!" cried Abdul Aziz. He sprang from his couch, snatched the paper from the man's hand and glanced at its contents. As he read, his features were convulsed with rage; his voice choked him. "Ha! my honest nephew, this is your fidelity. Liar! Traïtor! Oh! if I had you now, how I would tear you to pieces," and he crumpled up the paper, as if it were a living thing, in his outstretched hand.

"Who brought this?" he asked.

"Redif Pasha."

"Tell the slave that I refuse. Am I to speak twice? Tell him, if he values his head, he had better leave the palace at once."

The eunuch delivered the message to Redif Pasha. "We shall see," replied he, and taking out a second Irade, more peremptory than the first, he delivered it to the eunuch with a stern look.

"Take him this; tell him that resistance is hopeless. The palace is blocked by land

and by sea, even the watergate at Beshiktach is watched. Youssef Pasha is arrested, and all his favourite captains of the guard are deported to Asia. He's a rat in a trap. Look here, you black-faced baboon, do you see this?" He drew his sword with a menacing gesture.

"Yes, Pasha," and the eunuch's teeth chattered as if with ague.

"Very well; see that you give my message properly, and that it is obeyed at once, or else you and your master—" he paused, looked significantly at the chief of the harem, then drew his finger significantly across his throat.

The terrified Nubian returned to his master. The Sultan was walking furiously up and down the room, strewn with the pieces of furniture he had broken in his rage.

"Has the *pezavenk* gone?"

"No, Majesty, here is another Irade; he says that you are to obey it at once, or he threatens us both with death."

"Ha!" cried the Sultan, "we shall see." He strode to the door and shouted, "Help,

help! treason, treason! Where are they? Where is Youssef? Where is Hassan?"

"Youssef is a prisoner; Hassan has been sent to Asia."

"Have I no one to help me? Where are the captains of the guard, Izzet, Mehemed, and the others? Where are my soldiers?"

"They are sent to Asia too."

The Sultan's face fell. "Is there no way of escape? Can I not slip out of the palace in front?"

"The palace is full of soldiers, and the streets lined with troops."

"By sea? My caique on the river is ready."

"The ironclads are watching the palace."

"There is still a way by Beshiktach, creeping along the shore."

"That is watched too."

The Sultan, like a true Oriental, saw that escape was hopeless. He became suddenly calm, and resigned himself to his fate.

He bowed his head. "Let the will of God be done!"

But the Valide, who had been awakened, and learned the news, flew at Redif Pasha.

"Is it a just thing, Pasha, to raise revolts? Are you not all slaves whom the bounty of our house has fed?"

"Not your slaves, Hanoum Effendim."

"Is my son not Padishah?"

"No, for he has set justice and order at naught, and has ruined the empire with his folly and extravagance. He is deposed, and Sultan Murad is now Padishah."

The Valide turned to the soldiers, "Are there none of you who will help me? These men of blood are going to kill the Sultan whom you love. Will none of you protect him?"

"His life is safe," said Redif.

"Safe! you black-hearted traitor, when that bloodthirsty tiger, Avni, seeks his life, and the cowardly Murad lives in fear of his very shadow! He is too brave to be safe." She paused a moment, gathering fresh wrath, her features contorted with passion. "May

vengeance light on you and all the traitors who sent you! May your bodies rot with disease! May your days be uneasy, and your nights haunted with terror! May you be tortured in life, and your death be a foretaste of your eternal damnation!"

Redif Pasha, not much affected by this language, turned his back and shrugged his shoulders; but the Valide, her face black with hatred, poured forth a fresh volley of curses on the conspirators and the whole Turkish nation, neither sparing their mothers' graves, nor the decency of her own sex.

The Sultan, too, moved by sympathetic imitation, fell into a fresh paroxysm of rage, which continued till he was rowed off to his new abode, along with the Valide and Youssef Izzedin.

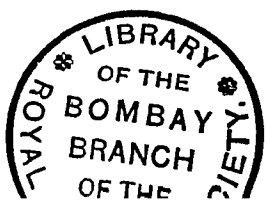
At six in the morning the brave cosmopolitans were awakened from their sleep by loud salvoes of artillery.

Had their dreams turned out a reality? Had the massacre begun? The vessels anchored in the Bosphorus cannonaded loudly, and were answered by as loud thunders

from all the ironclads in the Golden Horn, and from the land batteries.

This time they meant it. "Allah! Allah! Santa Maria! Dios! Jehovah!" It had come with a vengeance. The Turks and Christians trembled in their beds. At Stamboul, at Pera, and round about Galata and Kadikeni, there was a very earthquake of fear, and General Ignatieff, who had invented the fiction of massacre so often that he had finished by believing it, started from his slumbers and thought of instant flight.

Happily for the peace of the quaking population, the public criers rushed along the streets, some on foot, some on horseback, and quickly dissipated their terrors by announcing that Abdul Aziz was deposed, and his nephew, Murad V., raised to the throne.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CHAPTER X.

THE visit of his ministers had left Murad a prey to terrible anxiety and vacillation. Dread of the failure of the revolution, dread of its success, inability to prepare his mind for either event, the forebodings of blood-shed, stirred up by Avni's sinister proposal, the contradictory messages of fear and hope going and coming in his mind, filled his soul with suspense and torment. If the conspirators did succeed, what then? However conscientious his intentions, however ideal his schemes of progress, would he ever be able to carry them out? He knew that against Turkish prejudice and Turkish corruption were needed a will of iron and a fine and cunning suppleness. He possessed neither. He was forced to use crutches, and he would fain have walked alone, for he feared that, if he once used his ministers as

props, he would never be able to 'do without them, and would be forced to follow their unscrupulous statecraft. This exaggeration of his own weakness was deepened by the reaction which followed his excessive indulgence in strong drink, to which, since his last terrible meeting with Avni, he had flown for comfort more recklessly and regularly than ever.

In his moments of elevation, born, it must be confessed, of the vintage of Champagne, he would look forward to a reign in which justice, mercy, and truth should raise Turkey high among European nations: at other times, under the reaction of excess, his melancholy would fall back on itself, and faint and grow weary as it contemplated the Herculean tasks of reform which lay before him. Then again he would have recourse to his treacherous consolation, only to suffer from a still worse reaction. He became more and more nervous and irritable, morbidly alive to every accident, every rumour; beset with a phantasmagoria of terrors such as prepare the way for a greater catastrophe.

Such was his state of mind on the 29th of May, 1876. On the preceding days he had received visits from his friends, and everything had led him to suppose that the revolution would not break out before the 31st. He had retired to rest at an early hour, and after a night of restlessness, he had fallen into a profound sleep towards morning.

From this sleep he was suddenly awakened by Hussein Avni, who, with a stride like a sergeant-major about to arrest a deserter, advanced towards the sleeper and shook him roughly.

"Awake! Awake, Sultan Murad!"

Murad, first bewildered, then frightened, stared with open eyes at the harsh and threatening figure of the Seraskier, who, armed with a six-chambered revolver, stood by his bedside.

Had the revolution failed? Were they going to kill him? were the first thoughts of the terrified Prince, as he regarded, with eyes dilated with terror, the terrible visitor. He could not utter a word. Fear, like an earthquake, had paralyzed his speech.

"Calm yourself, Sultan Murad. No harm is meant you."

But the Seraskier's figure was not suggestive of calm, nor did it inspire faith.

Murad stammered out at length, "What has happened?"

"The palace is surrounded by troops, Abdul Aziz is a prisoner. A *Fetva* has been issued proclaiming his deposition, and your succession as the legitimate heir. Time presses. Get up and come with me."

Still Murad could not believe him. They had failed, he thought; Avni had turned traitor, and he was going to lead him to death.

"I will not rise," he shrieked out.

"You must. Refuse, and I use force. You are our Sultan, and you must show yourself to the faithful, who are waiting to proclaim you sovereign."

"I would rather have my throat cut—here—in my bed."

"It will be if you resist a moment longer. Shake off these suspicions. Here, take my revolver. At the least appearance of treason on my part, you can blow out my brains."

Murad looked keenly at Avni, whose cruel eye was lit up with savage excitement. A fresh suspicion crossed his mind. If Abdul Aziz had been really deposed, had this brute made away with him?

"And my uncle—is he safe?" asked Murad, stealing a frightened look at the Seraskier.

"Safe—your Majesty! Do you take me for an ogre? Why should I take his life? But come, Midhat and the rest are eagerly waiting to hail you as their new Padishah."

Murad, half convinced, and still terrified, took the proferred revolver and followed his guide.

But a fresh terror awaited him, Avni had forgotten the password which Redif Pasha had given him. Obeying his instructions, the sentinel presented his bayonet and stopped them as they were going out. Avni, however, whose presence of mind never deserted him, threw open his coat, and showing his breast, covered with decorations, he thrust the soldier vigorously aside.

"What," he thundered, "donkey, don't

you know your chief who is accompanied by his aide-de-camp ? Make way ! " And they passed the astonished sentry : Avni with head erect and confident, his companion shrinking along at his side.

A caique awaited them on the shore. They entered it accompanied by a few attendants. Murad was impatient to cross the Bosphorus, but Hussein Avni had some orders to give, and the caique was directed toward an ironclad in front of the palace. Once more the brain of the Sultan began to reel.

My dungeon ! Determined to make one desperate effort to save himself, he was about to jump into the water, but, as he was hesitating, in a moment the orders were given and executed, and the oars, lightly dipping in the water, impelled the boat on its way to the Seraskierat.

Murad was but partially reassured.

" Where are you taking me ? " he asked fearfully. " This is not Top-Capou."

" The coronation does not take place there, but at the Seraskierat," answered Avni.

This departure from the usual custom was due to Avni's instigation. He did not choose that the revolution should be stamped as a popular one, but as a *coup militaire.* Then he could rightfully claim Murad's gratitude; then he could say, "It is to me, to your War Minister, that you owe the throne," and flourish the obligation over the Sultan's head when he was unmanageable. Indeed, Avni proposed to himself to treat Murad as a child. The Seraskier was to be the dictator of Turkey.

On landing they rapidly drove to the Seraskierat, where all the ministers were assembled, together with the Patriarchs of the different churches and other dignitaries, Greek, Christian, and Turk. The deposition of Abdul Aziz and the accession of Murad were then read.

The cannon, which had thundered far and wide over the city, had announced the glad tidings, and the public criers, on foot and on horseback, rushing through the streets, soon put an end to the suspense which for three weeks had kept the public in agitation. And

now a general explosion of joy broke out. Old things were to become new. A new reign of peace, with justice and mercy for its bulwarks, was to be established, and anarchy and corruption, bound by the spirit of progress, were to be thrown into deepest hell.

The people were prepared to meet their deliverer. On his return from the Seraskierat to Sirkedji-Iskellessi, a delirious crowd greeted the new monarch with loud acclamations. Joy and illusions of happiness filled his heart as he heard them, but they were very soon to be dispelled, for, as he approached the palace in his splendid caique, he caught sight of another and more humble one, with the deposed monarch and his family leaving for Top-Capou. The spectacle touched Murad's heart with profound commiseration. He turned pale and burst into tears.

Crowds flocked pell-mell to Dolma Bagtche, including women, though they could not be admitted to the ceremony of his installation. The palace inside was thronged with Patriarchs, Ulemas, Softas, all of whom he

received with characteristic grace and dignity. His rare quality of benevolence taught him to despise the petrifying and theatrical dignity of great monarchs, and to value alone that higher courtesy which comes from the heart, and regards all mankind as brothers.

The cosmopolitans understood the aspirations of the Sultan for intellectual and moral reform, and they prepared to give him a welcome such as no Sultan ever had before; and, indeed, as he passed on his way to the Selamlik, his handsome face and dark expressive eyes, beaming with good wishes and intelligence, were such as to call forth rapturous applause. Could it be that he was a descendant of the bigoted and bloodthirsty line of the Osmans? He looked rather like the incarnation of a new era, the herald of joy and prosperity. Alas! for the deceptions of history, for the irony of Fate!

On his way he paid the traditional visit to the Sanctuary of Top-Capou, where the cloak of Mohammed is kept. Thence he proceeded to Santa Sophia, chosen with admirable tact for the performance of the ceremony. For

the Greeks still regard that mosque as their national church. The new Sultan entered the mosque; the muezzin appeared on the gallery of the minaret, and the vast and rapidly increasing multitude of the faithful outside, including for once both Turk and Rayah, knew that prayer was being offered up in the Church of St. Constantine, the national saint of the Greeks. Never before, perhaps never again, will Constantinople see such another sight. It was a crowd composed of the various races of the empire, besides Franks and visitors, Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Albanians, Arabs, with all their varied costumes and physiognomies; officials, merchants, labourers, eunuchs, dervishes, priests, wandering fakirs, Circassians with their picturesque dress and soldier-like bearing, officers bedizened with stripes and embroidered with gold; Turkish dames and their children, free at least on that day, and hoping for total freedom hereafter, with their flowing, many-coloured robes and their transparent yashmaks, thundered at in vain by imperial irades. It was a sea of red fezzes dotting the mass of

dark uniforms, varied here and there by the sugar-loafed hats of the dervishes and the white turbans of the Osmanlis, all wedged in a compact mass and animated by an enthusiasm rarely seen in the apathetic East.

As the Sultan left the mosque and entered his carriage, the delirious enthusiasm of the crowd, long panting for vent, broke out in a tempestuous cry which must have startled the ex-Sultan in his moody retirement, and given a fresh pang to the disappointment of General Ignatieff. What shouting! What excitement! It seemed more like an English crowd than a Turkish one, which usually speaks with bated breath and in whispered monosyllables. Now, not only the Turks but their Rayah compatriots gave free vent to their emotions. The horses neighed and pawed the ground, the band struck up the national hymn, and the *cortège* rode off, preceded by aides-de-camp, dashing along with slackened rein and headlong speed, and followed by the carriages of the ministers and generals in their rich and varied uniforms,

and that of the chief eunuch, black-faced and red-fezzed. The crowd, more and more excited by novelty and hope, and swollen by fresh currents from the side streets, swayed to and fro and pressed on the soldiers, who, like a hedge, lined the way. The very street seemed moving; old and young, white men and black, bond and free, Christians with their crosses, Turks with their Korans in hand, as if to consecrate the ceremony, Jews and infidels all thronged forward to catch a glimpse of the new Padishah. Every coign of vantage, each street corner or rising ground, the windows, the housetops were crammed with spectators; from garrets, from basements, from latticed windows, bright-eyed houris, laughing Greek and Armenian girls, darted their eager glances on the well-loved and handsome Sultan. Each face was decked with joy and tears of emotion. The air was deafened with shouts, *Ζητο! Ζητο!* Long life to the Sultan! *bin yacha*, a thousand years to the Padishah, rang out on every side, softened by the melodious cries of the Turkish women, who

hailed the advent of their deliverer, and threw flowers in his way. Even the Turkish soldiers bore the inevitable jostling of the crowd with good humour. For once the *Giaours* were not insulted as *Pezavenks*, or driven back with musket blows.

Murad's delicacy was oppressed with this exaggerated ovation, but his heart swelled with gratitude and happiness as he noted the joy of the people. Putting aside Oriental etiquette, he bowed on the right hand and on the left to the cheering crowd. The quick-witted Greeks understood at once what such a breach of etiquette really meant, and, as it were from one single throat, such a cry arose, as that with which Mars terrified their ancestors on the plains of Troy, or that which rang out when the Ten Thousand once more caught sight of the sea which was to restore them to their native country. Some, indeed, were for unharnessing the horses and dragging the chariot to the palace, at which intended manifestation some of the Old Turks rolled their eyes in stupefaction. Was this

their Sultan? Had Allah indeed forsaken them?

Murad entered his palace in a whirl of excitement. He was too full of enthusiasm to think soberly, but he felt that such a moment of content amply repaid him for the trials and agitations through which he had passed. But his brief satisfaction was soon disturbed by the direful apparition of the War Minister.

With a martial salute, he took the liberty to inform his Majesty, in a harsh, grating voice, that it was not the custom for Sultans to reply to public homage.

"So much the worse for the custom," answered Murad irritably; "I intend to introduce a better one."

"And among this shouting rabble," continued Avni brutally, as if he had not heard the reply, "one could distinguish the stinking breath of the Giaours."

"What do you mean by a Giaour?" replied Murad, more and more offended.

"All those who are not Mussulmen," said Avni contemptuously.

"What does that matter? Are they not all men alike? Why preserve an offensive distinction between the subjects of the same empire? Do I not owe them all the same affection? Must I not have the welfare of the Greeks and Armenians as much at heart as that of the Turks and Arabs?"

"If these are your ideas," said Avni frowning, "I would advise your Majesty not to manifest them too openly. If once the rumour circulates that the Sultan is an avowed partisan of the Giaours your sovereignty is in peril." He paused, then added sternly, "Already there is a spirit of discontent abroad. The adherents of Abdul Aziz are cowed but not vanquished. How they will rejoice, how they will gather force as this rumour passes from mouth to mouth, and is repeated in every mosque and Turkish home. What conspiracies, what revolutions may not ensue when it is known that our Padishah is a Giaour at heart—an infidel, a Freemason."

Murad's face flushed. "I do not believe you. Is it an evil thing to sympathize with

one's own subjects? And as to being a Freemason, was not Abdul Kadir a Freemason? Was his faith ever suspected on that account?".

"All these are dreams, Majesty. Liberty, equality, fraternity, will never fit into an absolute government such as in Turkey, where religion itself forbids us to be friendly to Christians."

"It is useless talking—we shall never agree. But I forgot; here is a letter from the ex-Sultan. My poor uncle! He complains of his residence, and begs that he may be transferred to Tcheragan. This must be done."

"Does your Majesty think it wise at such a moment," said Avni—whose aim was to prevent the Sultan from feeling in absolute security—"while there are so many plots in the air? There is a strong reaction among the Softas, some of whom are organizing a conspiracy in favour of Youssef Izzedin. Indeed, we are in hourly dread of an attack on the palace."

"And that is why you have surrounded

the palace with a triple cordon of soldiers," replied Murad, nervously. "I suppose next you will want me to be shut up in my own palace, and to be watched and guarded when I go out, as if I were a State prisoner."

"It is to be regretted," said Avni coldly, "that your Majesty misunderstands our zeal for your welfare. It would be the height of imprudence to allow your Majesty to go out alone, exposing your sacred person to the risks of assassination."

"And my friends?"

"Your friends will not be allowed at present to see you, as their visits will give rise to disturbing rumours."

"Then I am not master of my own movements," exclaimed Murad. "At any rate, it is my will that Abdul Aziz be removed to Tcheragan. I will not have him persecuted."

"Your Majesty shall be obeyed," said Avni, making another military salute as he took his leave.

"Ouf!" cried the unfortunate Sultan,

"now he is gone I can breathe again. With his airs of dictator, his hectoring assumption of superiority, he seems to think that he is the real Sultan, and I only his puppet."

CHAPTER XI.

HUSSEIN AVNI was not a statesman. He had indeed a strong individuality and a narrow-minded patriotism, but he was far too rash and short-sighted for the crisis through which Turkey was passing. Ambitious, proud, overbearing, it seemed to him quite natural that one man, and that man the Seraskier, should be put above the many; that he should be powerful, they weak; he rich, they poor; he a tyrant, they slaves; and next to that, but quite subordinate to it, that the unique and absolute privileges of the Ottoman caste should be maintained. He had a feeling of extreme contempt for the humanitarian sentiments of Murad and his sympathy with the rascally Rayahs. And he was so impatient of that Prince's opposition to his will, that it required all his Oriental dissimulation to keep his scorn within bounds: Murad was

a child, and should be treated as a child. If he was petulant, he must be made to feel his helplessness, and be isolated from the sympathy of his ministers. Avni found a ready sympathizer in Ruchdi, who, far too weak to swim against the stream, was delighted to find that the strong Seraskier and the rest of the ministers were opposed to the new Sultan and the radical changes he advocated.

"Have you studied the Padishah's new programme?" asked the War Minister contemptuously of his colleague. "The young fool is setting up as a Reformer. He aims at nothing less than placing all the subjects and races of the Porte on a footing of perfect equality, as regards their religious and political rights. A constitution, forsooth, is to be established on the basis of democracy, which would at once sweep away all Mussulman privileges."

"Very bad—very bad, indeed," ejaculated Ruchdi, wiping his weeping eyes.

"And this after we have consented to a constitution on the basis of law and order, on

the condition, of course, that it does not interfere with the privileges of rich Turks. Is that not enough for these Giaours?"

"Yes, Pasha, yes," answered Ruchdi, nodding his head. "Quite my idea."

"And this baby wants to give these beastly plebeians a parliament, so that they may frame laws for us. All these bow-legged tailors and blear-eyed shoemakers, all these slaves, these beasts of burden, all the cut-throats and riffraff of Galata, who were born for servitude and are fit for nothing else, are to make peace or war, and cut down our privileges at their caprice."

"It is not to be thought of," said Ruchdi.

"But it must be thought of. Once let this mob get the upper hand, then adieu to all authority, all law, all order. Will you support this?"

"No! no! I am entirely of your opinion. Murad is a dreamer, he lacks experience."

"Well, then, will you join us? Will you oppose these changes? The other ministers are unanimously with me. We will bring our united weight to bear on the Sultan, and

force him to recognize that he is a cypher, and that the real power is in the hands of his ministers."

"Yes! yes! I will."

"A severe administration, a good army, a good navy for Turkey. As to the rest, she can shift for herself. Is that not your idea?"

"Yes! yes! Pasha; we understand each other."

And so Avni Pasha, backed up by Ruchdi and the other ministers, formed themselves into a solid phalanx and resisted the projected reforms of Murad. When the new Sultan sought for sympathy and support for his large and pregnant ideas, in regard to the advance of education and intellectual and moral progress, he only met with coldness or with opposition. All of his counsellors, under one form or another, wished for the unique privileges and absolute supremacy of the Ottoman caste. All of them were slaves to their self-seeking, or their exclusiveness.

Midhat was far more liberal. He approved, indeed, to some extent of Murad's ideas.

Though so profound a difference in character existed between the philanthropic Sultan and the unscrupulous statesman, yet the latter was the only man in Turkey who could have, in some measure, put Murad's ideals into a practical form. Midhat's motto was expediency. He was at once a disciple of Mirabeau, and a Turkish patriot. He saw clearly that it was impossible for Turkey to exist unless she followed in the wake of European nations, and it was his design to throw overboard just as much and no more of the cargo of the State vessel, as would preserve her from capture. He was the pilot who could have guided the Christopher Columbus, Murad, in his voyage towards the undiscovered lands of Reform. He would have cast the anchor and consulted the charts at the needful moment, and later on, when time was ripe, he would have got rid of Avni, and sent Ruchdi into retirement. He knew both how to wait and how to dissimulate.

Murad, unfortunately, had neither capacity. His merits and his defects, his love of truth,

and his downrightness, his openly expressed indignation against unscrupulous action and unscrupulous instruments, quite as much as his overwrought susceptibilities and weak will, were alike unadapted for his perilous position. He saw clearly in a last discussion with his ministers that no one would, or even desired to, second him. Seized with bitter disgust at the opposition to his philanthropic schemes and the deep-rooted prejudices of his counsellors, he sought oblivion in the powerful stimulants, to which he had resorted, more and more, since the crisis had broken out.

CHAPTER XII.

THE Seraskier vented all vindictiveness of his vindictive nature on the captive of Top-Capou. His overbearing will had so often been thwarted, his prospects so often injured by the ex-Sultan's caprice, he was so convinced that Aziz had plotted his destruction, and would do so again if restored to power, that he had motives enough to hate his fallen chief and get rid of him. But, warned by Midhat that assassination was out of fashion in European courts, and knowing he could expect no co-operation from his *confrères*, Avni adopted the method hinted at by his more subtle colleague, and carried it out with all the inexorability of his character.

His tactics were to goad the deposed monarch into fury. He loaded him with insults, refused him the slighest favour, and

made the chains of his captivity as galling as possible. He treated Murad's orders with contempt, did not transfer his uncle to the palace of Tcheragan for three days, pretending that conspiracy was afoot, refused to let him have the 20,000 Turkish liras he had left behind him at Dolma-Bagtche, and surrounded his prison at Tcheragan with a triple cordon of soldiers. Worst of all, he gave strict orders that the prisoner was not to leave his apartments. "Let him chafe and fret his soul out in prison, and then, if the tendency to madness, of which he had given palpable proofs in the zenith of his prosperity, reappeared with fatal consequences, it was the captive's affair, not his."

The ex-Sultan, who, until then, had lived in almost uncontrolled power, and indulged in every whim and caprice, now found himself thwarted at every turn, and what was harder for a sportsman and athlete to bear, deprived of the liberty and free air enjoyed by the meanest of his subjects. A stronger brain, a more patient nature might well have succumbed under such a trial. But to one

who had been an absolute monarch like Abdul Aziz, it led the way to madness. All his convictions were torn up at one fell wrench. All the conditions of his life were utterly reversed. He, Sultan Aziz, was the captive of his own captive, Murad. He, who had been as a God to his subjects, was under the orders of a common soldier. He, whose brutality had been unchecked, had to submit to the brutal insults of his late minister. It was not conceivable. But yesterday a great Sultan, to-day a wretched prisoner! At last, as Avni expected, there came a crisis. Furious, yet impotent, he was pacing up and down the room like a newly-caged lion, in a desperate attempt to drive away the thought of his humiliation and Murad's triumph, but the narrowness of the space, and the monotony of the exercise, only aggravated his impatience. He muttered to himself rapidly, "Up and down, up and down! No air, no space, no liberty. Twenty steps up, twenty steps down. This accursed den! No more space than I give my tiger. One—

two—three—four. I'll bear it no longer; I must go out."

He opened the door and stepped out on the esplanade, looking on the Bosphorus, which he paced with rapid strides. The guard, who had watched him with Oriental patience for some time, begged him politely to re-enter.

"Dog!" shouted the deposed monarch, "do you know who I am?"

"Abdul Aziz Effendi."

"Go to the devil."

The soldier reported to the colonel, and that officer, approaching his ex-Majesty courteously, observed that it would be better for him to go inside, as the night air might injure his health.

"What, again!" exclaimed the unhappy man. Then, drawing his revolver, he fired at the officer, who just at that moment was making a Turkish salute, and thus avoided a sudden death. The noise of the report brought several soldiers to the spot, at the sight of whom Abdul Aziz retired to his room. Almost immediately he returned to

the esplanade, crying with a loud voice: "Have I no one to defend me? Where are the men I have loaded with honours and benefits? And you, my son, to whom I have confided my army, my fleet! Where are your regiments, your ironclads? Why do you not come to my aid, and annihilate my enemies?"

Thus raging, the night passed. As the day broke, his fury gave way to melancholy, which was displayed in incoherent words, and beset with hallucinations. Sometimes he would give orders to the fleet; and now he would reproach Hussein Avni, and now pour maledictions on Murad; then he would issue commands to his ministers as if they were present.

On the evening of June 3rd, his aide-de-camp requested him to give up his revolver.

"What need has my dear nephew of revolvers?" he snarled ironically.

"Perhaps your Highness may wound yourself accidentally."

"Come and take it."

The aide-de-camp saluted. He only

begged that it might be handed to him. The Sultan gave it, but, as the officer was going, he recalled him. "Fool, you have taken my revolver and you leave my yataghan and pistol attached to my girdle. Take them, too. Murad has taken everything else. Let him have these also; all for Murad—all."

The officer hesitated to approach.

"Idiot, are you afraid? A lion does not touch flies," and he thrust the weapons into the hands of the scared officer, who retired.

His wife and the Valide, the only two beings who loved him, watched these paroxysms of rage and melancholy with growing anxiety. The latter, in vain, tried to soothe him. Each time she approached, she was repulsed brutally. At last, profiting by a calmer moment, she went to him softly,—

"My soul, my life, will you not speak to me?"

"My life!" echoed Aziz ironically, "say my death, rather. Miserable wretch, you have been my ruin."

"I do not deserve this," said the Valide reproachfully. "After all the affection I

have displayed, is this the return? How have I wronged you?"

"It is you, vile creature," he exclaimed as he glared at her with his large, fiery eyes, "who are the cause of all my misfortunes. It is your intrigues and devilry that have brought me here. What education have you given me? What crime of mine have you not encouraged? Recollect that Bulgarian girl, and that Greek, and how many more! All! All of them lift up their heads and cry for vengeance against us both." He turned from her abruptly and muttered to himself, "They will not have to wait long."

At this speech, which revealed a nature so perverse and dead to natural sentiment, his mother was struck dumb. She looked at him; his dilated eyes were those of a madman. Checking her rising terror, she went silently away.

On the Sunday Abdul Aziz woke tranquilly, passed some time in reading, then very quietly asked his wife for a small pair of scissors.

As she was returning with them, the Valide

asked her in a whisper, "How is it with him?"

"He looks quieter than he did. But how he frightened me."

"What is he going to do with these scissors?"

"Let us go softly and watch him."

Gliding on tiptoe and holding their breath they looked into the room.

The Sultan, with all the cunning and keen sense of lunacy, had heard them and divined their purpose. He went on quietly trimming his beard.

Satisfied with this apparent calm, they retired softly.

"Now."

He took off his coat and bared his arm, then with the scissors he cut the vein in his left arm, and the blood flowed freely.

"Now, my dear nephew, now, traitor Avni, and all of you! I would have killed you. Come and glut your vengeance."

His life was leaving him rapidly, but with a last effort he changed the scissors into his left hand and made a faint attempt to cut the

vein in the right arm, but he only partially succeeded, and fell back giddy and faint.

The women, who waited some little time for his re-appearance, grew alarmed.

Miriam turned a white, frightened face towards the Valide.

"Nonsense, child," said the latter, answering her look and giving the lie to her own maternal apprehensions, "what can have happened? Go and call him."

"I am afraid."

The Valide went quickly to her son's apartment. As she advanced, she saw a stream of blood working its way like a serpent under the door. She screamed, and rushed into the room.

"Aziz, Aziz! My son, my son! Who has done this?"

The ex-monarch raised himself a little, and turning his eyes piteously towards his mother: "I killed myself. I could not survive these indignities." So saying, he fell backwards. Then his mother, giving vent to her despair, beat her breast and wrung her hands, uttering loud cries of grief. Miriam

ran in at her cries, threw herself frantically on the ground, kissed the hands and feet of the dead man, and wept bitterly.

Avni, apprized of the event, appeared on the scene accompanied by two officers. He stood by the side of the corpse and the weeping women. One moment, a look of gratified hate passed over his face. The next it wore a glacial calm. Roused by his presence, the women raised their heads, and as the Valide looked upwards a deadly expression of hatred shot up in her eyes.

"You Spartan butcher! Have you come to see the work of your hands?"

"Misfortune has disturbed your reason, Effendim. I had no hand in this."

"You lie, *Pezavenk!* Coward! When you got him in your power, did you cease to torment him one moment? You loaded him with insults until his brave heart could no longer bear it, and he slew himself. You—you are his assassin."

Avni frowned, but the woman did not lower her furious look.

"I would Hassan had been here," sobbed Miriam.

"Why, Effendim?" asked Avni.

"If he had, he would have made short work of you and all your satellites."

Avni smiled contemptuously, but he thought: I'll keep a sharper watch on Hassan all the same.

"And you think you will go unscathed," shrieked the Valide. "I tell you, in the shadow and the darkness, vengeance is preparing and hell is gaping for you. You black-hearted traitor, I would give the rest of my life to see you in torment."

Avni shrugged his shoulders.

"Come into the next room, Excellency," said one of the officers. "What is the use of listening to a mad woman?"

Avni gave instant directions that seventeen of the best physicians in Pera should be summoned to Tcheragan. On their arrival, he begged them to examine the corpse and pronounce their opinion. Some of them—the English physicians especially, who had lived long in the East, and knew it well—

were incredulous as to the suicide. But the position of the wounds finally decided their opinion. The ex-Sultan, they were further informed, had attempted suicide previously under less overwhelming circumstances. Insanity was in the family, and this was decisive. So their certificate, so well known in Europe, was drawn up and formally signed.

CHAPTER XIII.

FATE had been winding her coils round and round the unhappy monarch. Avni's blood-thirsty proposal, his startling apparition on the morning of the deposition of Abdul Aziz, his overbearing conduct, after Murad's assumption of the sovereignty, had so shocked and oppressed him, that he trembled like a bird before a rattlesnake, at each fresh interview with his War Minister. Everything deepened his feeling of helplessness. The palace was guarded, every movement of the royal captive was watched, his friends' visits, which would have soothed his imaginary fears, were hindered, and, far worse than all this outward oppression, an inward and prophetic fear haunted him of a coming catastrophe to his uncle. The effect of this strain on his nerves soon became apparent. His sleep was

broken and agitated, his food ceased to nourish him. He was seized by sudden and unexpected outbreaks of rage.

On Friday, 2nd June, Murad awoke with a nervous fever. He paid no attention to what was going on around him, but gave himself up to all the horrors of despondency.

On the Saturday night he did not sleep at all. He had tried, but weary with wakefulness and overwrought nerves, he sprang out of bed, and walked up and down the room in an agony of restlessness.

On the following morning, as he was paying the penalty of over-excitement, and his brain was giddy with want of rest, the three ministers—Avni, Ruchdi, Midhat—suddenly appeared before him, as startling and as sinister as the three witches before Macbeth.

Murad's eye was at once arrested by Avni's dark countenance, which foretold the fearful object of his visit.

"What now?" cried Murad aghast. "Why do you look so strangely at me?"

"My Padishah," said Ruchdi, "your uncle is dead."

"*Dead!*" Murad's eyes opened wildly.

"He committed suicide. By his side were found a small pair of scissors with which he opened a vein in his right arm. All the best physicians of Pera were called in to examine the body. Here is their report, duly signed by all of them. It is my sad duty to read it you,—

"'The death of Abdul Aziz has been caused by hæmorrhage, consequent on the veins of the arm having been opened.

"'The instrument shown to us is adapted for making the wounds referred to.

"'The direction and nature of the wounds, as well as the instrument by means of which they would have been produced, lead us to conclude that Abdul Aziz had committed suicide.'"

Murad, who had listened to Ruchdi as if he were relating some lying story, now regarded the ministers with a fixed stare of horror.

"Take comfort, Majesty," said Avni, in a

tone, however, not very comforting, and laying his hand on Murad's shoulder.

"Do you try to comfort me?" shrieked out Murad. "You death-owl. Take your hand off me. Did not my heart sink within me as you entered? Did not it tell me, as I looked at your bloodthirsty face, that you had murdered him?"

The ministers looked at each other.

Avni, enraged at this bold accusation, had the face of a devil.

"Why do you accuse him?" remonstrated Ruchdi, feebly. "Though Abdul Aziz was no friend to him, Avni is sorry for his death. Though the late Sultan had done so much harm, it was far from Avni's thought to destroy him. Besides, Majesty, in accusing one of us, you accuse all."

"And who but you should kill him? Was he not left in your charge? I prayed you to spare his life. Wretches that you are. You have covered me with eternal shame. Europe will be full of my reproach. Everyone will point the finger of scorn at me."

"The death," said Midhat, who had been watching Murad keenly, "must, so the physicians say, have occurred about 9 a.m., half an hour after the wounds had been inflicted. From 7 a.m. to 9.15 a.m. Avni and myself were engaged together, at the Porte, and perhaps some twenty secretaries and orderlies, as we can prove, entered our room, during that interval. How then could Avni have committed the murder?"

The Sultan made no answer, but with horror-struck stare looked straight before him, as if the scene of the murder was actually passing before his eyes.

"And this," exclaimed Avni, "is the gratitude of princes. This is our return for plotting night and day, in your interest, for running risk of exile, or death, so that you might reign. Was it possible for us to avert the deposition of the Sultan? and when it was done, could we pluck despair from his heart or madness from his brain? Could we foresee that he would commit suicide, and could we have prevented it, had we been able

to foresee it. Come, Ruchdi. Come, Midhat. The Sultan does not trust us. We are best away."

And he looked sideways at Murad, who answered never a word, but turned his back on the speaker.

CHAPTER XIV.

AMONG the officers whom Avni's precaution had removed from the palace before the *coup d'état*, was one Hassan, who belonged to the indomitable race of the Circassians. His father, who had emigrated to Turkey shortly after the suppression of the Circassian revolt, had given his son a military education, and owing to the protection of his sister, Miriam, who was a favourite of Abdul Aziz, the youth's career had been a brilliant one. He was appointed captain of the Imperial Guard, and soon afterwards was made aide-de-camp to Youssef Izzedin, its commander. This Hassan was a *beau sabreur*, skilled in all martial exercises. He could tame the wildest horses that no one else dared to mount; so good a marksman was he that he could, at full gallop, and without missing a shot, break eggs which were thrown up in the air

HASSAN BEY

Trübner's Pbl.

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for him to aim at. But his promotion would never have been gained by good conduct, for, though married, his life was licentious and irregular. He was a frequenter of low cafés, a drunkard, a gambler.

Hassan, removed from the palace before the *coup d'état*, had fallen into a state of gloom and dissatisfaction, which reached its climax when he learnt the news of the Sultan's death. Getting leave of absence from his colonel, he rushed off to the palace at Tcheragan. His sister and the ex-Valide had expected him. Prompted by revenge, they had concocted a plot together. They resolved to accuse Avni of having been the direct cause of the death of Aziz. And they made up a plausible story, which is believed by some to this day. They ruffled the ex-Sultan's hair and beard, threw out his arms, as in the act of struggling, and painted his face, that it might look black and strangled. Then they bribed two false witnesses.

As they heard Hassan's step clanking up the stairs, they awaited him in the room where the dead man lay. As he entered he

was arrested by the sight of two white faces standing by the coffin, the very images of despair.

As his sister saw him, she flung herself on his neck and burst into a passion of tears.

"Do you see him, Hassan? There he lies. Our benefactor! Our best friend! You know how he loved us! You know how he loved you! How he trusted you when he could trust no one else! When he was deposed he called aloud for you, and when these monsters strangled him, he gave a half-stifled cry for Hassan." And she burst into a fresh fit of sobbing.

"Hell and fury!" burst out Hassan. "How?"

"You shall hear, Hassan, though it break my heart to tell you." And then, in that sweet, warbling voice which seems given to Turkish women alone, and which made the listener's blood tingle with fury, she went on,—

"The Sultan was sleeping in the lower room, I up-stairs; I could not sleep that

night. A vague presentiment of evil kept me awake and restless. About three in the morning I rose and looked through the lattice. Three quilt-makers were at work on the terrace. Suddenly I saw a boat coming to our palace. I felt very frightened; I could not explain to myself why. The boat neared; the man steering made signs to the sentry, who retired. The three men in the boat landed, and their leader, who, like the other two, was muffled up, so that I could not distinguish his features, went up to the quilt-makers and spoke to them in a low voice. They all went into the house. I listened, but I could hear nothing. I wanted to run down to the Sultan, but I was seized with a sudden fainting fit. When I recovered, I hastened downstairs, and I saw the gardener, and Aziz' wrestler, who looked uneasy as they noticed me. I ran to Aziz' room, and, to my horror, I found him lying dead on the bed; a pair of small scissors on the table, and the floor drenched with blood. Then I fainted away again. When I came to myself the Valide was supporting me.

'What do you know about this?' asked the Valide. Then I told her. The Valide called in the gardener and the wrestler, and by dint of threats, bribes, and cajoling, she extorted the truth from them. These two men had been intimidated, and forced to join the plot by the three conspirators—Avni, Midhat, and Kaiserli—who compelled the quilt-makers to change clothes with them; then the three, with the gardener and the wrestler, took off their shoes and crept up, on tiptoe, to Aziz' bedroom. The wrestler got behind the bed; but Aziz awoke, and half raised himself on the pillow. 'Hassan! Hassan!' he cried out; but the wrestler, taking advantage of his position, threw his left arm round Aziz' neck, and drew him backwards. The others seized his arms—he was helpless. He could offer no effectual resistance. They strangled him."

Hassan, who had thrust his head forward in his eagerness to listen, his eyes wide open with rage, now sprang from his seat.

"Stop, Hassan!" insisted Miriam, "hear

the rest! Avni, quick as thought, taking out a pair of small scissors, before the Sultan was quite dead, opened a vein in his right arm. Then he slightly scratched the left. He put the scissors on the table, re-arranged the bed-clothes, composed the limbs, smoothed down the disordered hair, and then, with a mocking laugh, left the room, accompanied by the others."

"Damnation! Will you get out of my way?"

"Dearest Hassan, for my sake, for your own, be prudent! Do not risk your life. See Sultan Murad, and work on him."

"I will. I promise. Let me pass, girl; I am dangerous."

And ere his sister had time to think, his footsteps echoed on the stairs, and almost simultaneously the clatter of his horse's hoofs was heard as he galloped off in the direction of the palace.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ministers left Murad a prey to the keenest humiliation. He paced the room with feverish strides, giving vent to his excitement in broken phrases.

"The brutes! They have murdered him! What a horror! What an abomination! They knew I was helpless, and they have made a tool of me. All Europe will ring with my shame. What is that?"

It was a servant who entered.

"What do you want?" screamed Murad. "Go! Go!"

"May it please your majesty, an officer of the guard is below, and insists on seeing you."

"I will not see him. Send him away. Do you hear me?"

But while he spoke, a savage voice was

heard below, "Where is the Sultan? Stand aside, or—"

There was the noise of a short scuffle, the clank of a sabre on the marble stairs, and an officer, in the dress of the bodyguard of the Sultan, and wearing a large Russian cloak, strode into the room.

It was a striking and warlike figure, tall and commanding; but the impatient eyes, the protruding chin, the high cheekbones, and an air of recklessness and ferocity which hung about the man, inspired fear and repulsion.

"Who are you?" cried Murad, starting up and drawing his revolver.

"A man like yourself, perhaps much more so."

"How do you dare to come into our presence thus?" exclaimed Murad, still holding his revolver.

"Sultan Murad, I mean *you* no harm. Where are Hussein Avni, and the others?"

"They have just left."

"Where have they gone?"

"I do not know."

"You know that they have murdered your uncle?"

"Can you prove it?" asked Murad, who did not care to confide his conviction to this desperado.

"Prove it! They were seen to enter the palace with the gardener and the wrestler of Aziz. Two hours after, the report was spread that Abdul Aziz had committed suicide. Was he a man to commit suicide? Sultan Murad, there has been foul play, and Avni and the others are the murderers."

"What do you want with Avni?"

"To send him to hell."

"But wait."

"Wait? Wait? Will you avenge his murder?"

"I wish I could," replied Murad, looking the picture of irresolution.

"Are you not our Padishah? Are you going to sit quiet under this outrage? Will you crouch before your ministers like a slave, and be mocked with the name of Sultan? Do not deceive yourself. Do not think to escape danger by your cowardice. Your

time will come. They have slain Abdul Aziz, and they will slay you if you do not shake off their yoke. Rouse yourself! Have them arrested and strangled at once."

Murad's only answer was to stare at his ferocious visitor vacantly.

"Will nothing stir you, Sultan? These dogs were not content with dethroning him, but they must kill him with their own hands. And such a death! To die of a lingering illness, that is bad; but to wake up out of deep sleep, to be seized by the rude hands of men whom you have loaded with favours, to see their devilish faces distorted by hate! By Allah, if I had fifty lives, I would have given them all to have cut the villains down. If you had seen him just after the murder, his hands stretched out as if struggling for breath, his face black, his beard and hair disorderly, had you seen his wife and mother weeping over the body, even your vengeance would not have loitered."

"No more! No more!" shrieked Murad, putting his hand before his face as if to shut out the horrible scene.

"Will you not avenge his murder then? Cannot you understand that you—you, Sultan Murad, will be thought their accomplice?"

"Silence, ruffian!" screamed Murad, at the top of his voice, "I forbid you to speak of it."

"And if I keep silence before you," answered the Circassian, becoming calmer, "will that ease your conscience? Will you let the assassins of Aziz go unpunished, when the dead man calls aloud for vengeance?"

Murad shuddered.

"If you fear him dead, how much more should you fear Avni living. Have you no courage, no resolution?" But he broke off suddenly, seeing that his appeals were ineffectual; "You shall not fear long. Though you forget the Sultan's benefits, and tolerate assassins and traitors, there is one man in Turkey who knows how to avenge his master."

"Stay, Hassan."

But the Circassian had gone.

CHAPTER XVI.

MURAD put his hands to his temples, "Oh, my head! My head! Am I going mad? I thought, as that savage was speaking, that the whole scene was passing before my eyes. It was an illusion begotten of weakness and want of sleep. I will think no more. I will rest," and he flung himself on the sofa and tried to sleep. Presently he started up, then sat down. "I cannot sleep. My thoughts torture me. Was there ever such a miserable plight as mine? What can I do? Which way can I turn? Who can I trust? There's Midhat, who seeks power, and Ruchdi, who is a fool, and that devil, Hussein Avni, who murdered my uncle; all against me! Miserable wretches to betray me thus! How can I face the opinion of Europe? My own uncle—who spared hi-nephew's life and loaded him with kinds

ness. Who will believe what I say? It was to my interest that my uncle should die and that I should plot against him. Yes, Hassan, they *will* think *me* his murderer, and the accomplice of assassins. I shall be held up as a monster of ingratitude. What torment! What ignominy! I promised that no one should attempt his life, and these brutes have assassinated him. They have dragged my good name through the mire, and all the water in the Bosphorus cannot wash it clean. But I will act. I will punish them. I will have such a revenge as will make Europe ring with horror."

He rose from his seat, rushed up and down the room with rapid strides, muttering incoherently to himself. His thoughts came quicker and more disorderly, and his mind began to reel.

The unfortunate monarch flung himself again on his couch. But his pulse throbbed, his head burned. He turned restlessly to and fro,—

"I cannot sleep!" he exclaimed. "My brain is a hell, and all the devils are in it."

His mind was giving way under the strain. He could no longer separate the real from the imaginary ; and amid all these thronging fancies which came and went, was one which, ever present, fixed itself on his tortured heart. He, Murad, the gentle, the compassionate, to be execrated as an assassin and a traitor ! Innocent yet guilty, Sultan yet powerless. The woes threatening his empire; the iniquity of his government, the intrigues of his ministers, resolved themselves into a thousand strange and fantastic combinations. Ruin without. Shame within. The air was full of dolorous voices and menacing shapes. Now he saw an unfortunate Rayah in the grip of a pasha, and the poor wretch turned his eyes piteously towards him for help, and, as he looked, the victim became a dove, and his oppressor a fierce bird, greedy of eye and sharp of beak, which tore the dove to pieces before his eyes. Then he was a fly buzzing round the net of a huge hideous spider, which drew him towards its net with fatal fascination. He felt himself in the grip of the hairy legs ; the foul breath,

like a poisonous blast, blew in his face; when suddenly the spider was transformed into the cruel figure of the Seraskier. With a desperate effort he freed himself from the loathsome embrace, and the figure was gone.

Was he asleep or was he waking? What was the difference? Which revealed the truth, the waking moments of illusion, or the dream of sleep? Was he going mad? The phantoms of his imagination were more real to him than living beings. Should he sleep again? No! sleep was a torment. Once more he paced up and down the room till his powers were exhausted. He lay on the sofa, his eyelids closed. If he could count on forgetfulness for a minute only, he might sleep. But other phantoms crowded into his brain. The princes he had known in Europe, his friends, flitted like ghosts before him, but as he approached them they recoiled with horror. Another change—there was a sound of harsh laughter, vibration of wings, screams of savage mockery. An endless crowd of hideous shapes darkened the air and

poured into the room, greeting him with mock reverences and salutations—This is Murad, the hope of Turkey—Murad the Reformer, who would make a new heaven and a new earth. This is the end of his lofty aspirations, of his philanthropic hopes—Hark! How the crowds were shouting! He could not longer endure his agony of self-contempt. The sweat-drops rose on his forehead, a deep moan escaped from his breast, and the illusions had vanished. But another vision rose before him: a figure in deep slumber—the sleeper was unknown to him. But he was aware, somehow, that a great crime was to be perpetrated, and that in some mysterious way he was involved in its consequences. It could be prevented if he would only rise and wake the sleeper—and yet effort was vain. Like a drowning man, he could not rise. He could not cry. His opportunity was lost. Staring with terror he saw five muffled figures creep to the bedside. The sleeper awoke. A despairing cry for help, a desperate struggle, a pause of awful silence. Then a woman's shriek pierced the

air; and now the murderers passed him. He saw their faces—Avni, Kaiserli, and three others—followed by an unknown shape, which turned on him a reproachful regard, as it exposed the livid and blackened features of his uncle.

He had been dreaming again. Better never to sleep at all than to dream thus. Oh, that awful night! that awful waking, when his mind, worn out, and incapable of further acute suffering, and scarcely conscious of its own identity, was yet haunted by a dull sense of misery and helplessness. Scarcely knowing what he was doing or why he did it, he went to the window and looked out.

What a calm! What a contrast! The morning was breaking softly and rosily over the tranquil sea, and the still sleeping city, like a queen unrobing for the bath, was stripping off her fog veils one by one, till all her breast-like domes and stately beauty lay bare to the view. The sun darted forth its winged arrows, gilding each spire and cupola, and tinting with

azure all the distant mountain tops. The spangled lawn, the flowers peeping from their buds, the chirp of the awaking birds, the vapoury clouds overhead, the sweet morning air, all things hailed the advent of light. As Murad looked at the scene, something of its beauty and rest passed into his soul. Once more he lay down, and this time slept profoundly.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAPOLEONE was a very presentable specimen of a charlatan. He was good-looking, well dressed, obseqüious in manner, and his voice, towards his superiors at least, soft and deferential; one of those types made for Turkey and the Turks who love abject submission from their inferiors. This man did not lack a certain ability. He had plenty of observation and cunning, some talent for intrigue, a soapy suavity of address, and a superficial knowledge of science. It was to these outward advantages, and the shallow wit of Murad's mother, that he owed his appointment as medical attendant on her son. It goes without saying that he was void of any solid merit, moral or intellectual, and that his supple conformity to the forms and usages of duty was a mask to hide his self-seeking.

This was the man who was sent for in haste on the morning of June 5th, 1876, when Murad awoke after a night of torture, pale and exhausted by fever and insufficient sleep. The quack, in order probably to follow up the lowering effect of the hot baths which he had ordered the Sultan to take, immediately gave instructions that thirty-six leeches should be applied to his temples. This drastic treatment of course produced disastrous consequences. Murad's nerves broke down completely. He was unable to bear the least noise or disturbance. He became so fierce that no one dared approach him, and, worst of all, his sleepless night resulted in an attack of intense irritability. His mind was haunted by lugubrious hallucinations followed by fits of sullen despondency, the nature of which could be dimly guessed by his mother, as she listened, sick at heart and full of doubts, to his incoherent words and strange monologues.

At first, she placed a blind trust in the illustrious Capoleone, and followed his instructions strictly; but, as the days passed, and

the bleeding and hot baths prescribed by him failed to effect a cure, she gave way to despair. And, indeed, if the Sultan had been left altogether to the tender mercies of this Levantine Sangrado, he must have succumbed rapidly. But luckily, at this juncture, she received help from another quarter.

There was a certain dervish living in a remote town in Turkey, who had passed his life in prayer and fasting, and had acquired a great reputation for sanctity and almsgiving. Many of the faithful used to resort to him for the benefit of his prayers, and many were the alleged wonderful cures effected, and alleged spiritual benefits received through his intercession.

His fame reached the ears of the Valide, and, in her despair, she ordered him to come to the palace, if haply he might do some good to her unhappy son, whose state seemed to defy all the remedies of earthly physicians.

The dervish, a man with a wild, far-off look in his eyes, was brought before the

Valide, who immediately introduced him to Murad's room. The unhappy monomaniac, stung by his one absorbing thought, was pacing the room restlessly, stopping now and then and muttering to himself, with strange gestures.

"May Allah have mercy on him!" exclaimed the dervish, after contemplating him a moment. "He is possessed with evil spirits. The air is full of those wicked genii, who wait on mischief, and help mortals to their evil desires. Sometimes they appear as angels of light, and beguile their victims with flattery. Sometimes, as you most unfortunately see before you, they come as ministers of fear and madness, stirring up illusions and deceitful visions. As he has voluntarily separated himself from the true faith, and given himself up to debauchery, he has come under the influence of these evil spirits, who hover about us, and take possession of those souls who have not the courage to resist them. But, console yourself, Hanoum, there is a difference between those who voluntarily give themselves

up to evil, and those who, like your son, are simply guilty of moral cowardice. It will be my privilege to stay with him. I will read over him, pray for him, and by the help of Allah he may yet be cured."

However fanatical the dervish may have been, he was at least a better physician than Capoleone. In addition to his spiritual administrations, he gave Murad a full dose of opium, under the influence of which the sufferer fell into a profound and prolonged sleep.

On the following morning Murad awoke as one recovering from a swoon, scarcely recollecting what had happened, or sensible whether he was still dreaming. Slowly and partially his consciousness returned, and he became aware of the objects around him. Two figures, who were regarding him anxiously, stood by his bedside.

Murad, like a being awakening from another existence, regarded them with a bewildered stare. He put his hand to his head.

"Are you not my mother?"

"Yes, yes, dearest Murad," she exclaimed joyfully, "are you really cured?"

Murad, recollecting dimly what had passed, lowered his eyes with shame. "Yes, I remember, I have been unwell; I am afraid I have not been in my right mind."

"But all that has passed, dearest Murad."

"Where am I now? What has happened? I dreamt that my uncle was dead, and that I was proclaimed Sultan."

"And so you are, my life."

"But how came he to die?" Murad asked irritably.

"He died in his bed."

Murad looked at his mother gloomily. His head dropped on his breast as he tried to recall the hideous dream, of which he retained such a painful but vague impression.

The dervish whispered to her not to remind him of what had passed.

"Don't think of it now, dearest Murad. Think how your health has been restored, and how overjoyed we all are at your recovery."

"But I want to know," he persisted peevishly.

"Murad, I entreat you, for my sake, to keep quiet."

"I obey you, mother. Indeed, my head is too weak and giddy to think of anything."

"Will you not go out a little? Your attendants will go with you."

"I will; but who is this man?"

"This is the good dervish Ali, to whom, with God's help, you owe your recovery. He has read over you and prayed for you during your illness."

Murad made a grimace, saluted the dervish coldly, and left the room.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER his stormy interview with the Sultan, the Circassian, Hassan, galloped back to his barracks in a state of intense excitement. His ruined prospects, his sister's grief, the cowardly assassination of his benefactor (for he believed Miriam's story), the treachery of Hussein Avni, his own removal from the palace before the *coup d'état*, were thoughts which worked like madness on his brain, and stirred up his desperate nature to its most desperate action.

Scarcely had he arrived at the barracks, when one of his comrades, after stealing a cautious look around, whispered,—

"Have you heard the news?"

"No," replied Hassan, with the air of one whose thoughts are elsewhere.

The man approached nearer. "That

Pczavenk, Hussein Avni, is going to banish us all to Asia."

"To Asia," repeated Hassan angrily, "I will not go."

"Kiss the hand you can't bite, Hassan. He is master. You must obey."

"Obey that black devil who killed Abdul Aziz! I will see him in hell first."

"What are you saying?" said the other, open-mouthed.

"What I can prove. Abdul Aziz has been murdered. Avni—Kaiserli—Midhat—were seen to enter the palace an hour before his death. Who else could have killed him? He was not a man to kill himself. You are not such a fool as to believe all that the doctors said about suicide."

"*Mashallah!* You don't say so."

"I tell you," said Hassan, raising his voice, "Avni is the murderer, and he shall pay for it."

"Hush! hush! comrade, they'll hear you."

"Let them hear. What have I to fear? My sister is driven to desperation. My

benefactor is dead. What have I left but vengeance?"

Here some other officers, attracted by the excited voice of the speaker, gathered round him. And to them all, with furious words and gestures, he repeated what he had just said, and exhausted himself in imprecations, chiefly against the Seraskier, declaring, that come what might, he would not go to Asia.

Walls have doubly fine ears in Turkey. Even the breezes of heaven, the birds of the air, seem to conspire to betray the most hidden secrets. It may be judged, then, how quickly Hassan's rash words were repeated to the War Minister.

"What!" exclaimed Avni, "this miserable rascal, this dog, whose banishment I had sweetened with promotion, dares to be insubordinate! To prison with him. Two days' arrest."

The order was carried out. In his confinement, after a violent outburst of rage, his prudence reasserted itself. He saw that rashness would ruin his plans, and he became outwardly calm. But all the more steadfast

grew his purpose. He would risk everything —torture, death—to destroy his hated enemy. And there he sat, or squatted, in his prison cell, maturing plan after plan of vengeance. So quiet was he, that his jailors, who knew his fierce character, marvelled.

His term of imprisonment expired, he presented himself before the Seraskier, who fixed a terrible look on him. But the subdued aspect of the Circassian disarmed him, and he regarded the liberated prisoner with astonishment.

"My term of imprisonment—just imprisonment—has expired, Excellency. I am here to crave pardon for my insubordination."

"You dog," answered Avni, "do you know that you merit hanging?"

"I do, Excellency. If it be your will, let your will be done. But I repent of the mad words I uttered. My benefactor was dead, my sister in despair. I knew not what I was saying."

"You know," said Avni, somewhat appeased, "that you have to go to Bagdad. But I will not rob you of your grade."

Hassan raised his hand successively to his heart, his lips, and his head, with feigned humility. "I go, Excellency, but I crave two days' leave to arrange my affairs."

"Take them," said Avni, but he fixed his fierce eye with fresh sternness on the pardoned culprit. "If you remain an hour behind time, I revoke my pardon."

Hassan saluted once more and left Avni's presence.

That same day he went to the War Minister's house. There he was informed that Avni had gone to dine at Midhat's konak. He turned away disappointed. What was to be done now? Only two days for action. He paused outside the house, gnawing his lower lip, took three steps forward, stopped again, and then, taking a sudden resolution, he rushed furiously towards the main street of Galata.

The place and the hour were in sympathy with the man's evil mood. It was a very ante-chamber of hell. The air reeked of low vice and debauchery. There were dirty restaurants, "hotels" without number, adver-

tised by paper lanterns, cafés, in which ill-favoured men were rattling dominoes and playing cards, wine shops full of ragged drunkards, whose faces were stamped with every variety of degradation and levity. Dancing saloons, eating houses, invited all this seething mass of thieves, beggars, pimps and assassins to eat, drink, and be merry while they might.

Striding through the filthy street, splashing into the fetid mud puddles, or treading on the yellow dogs in their impromptu kennels, Hassan halted before one of these Galata dens, went up a dark, dirty staircase, and found himself in the concert room, which was crowded with evil-looking faces. It was an atmosphere of obscene jokes, oaths, husky voices, noise, quarrelling and drunkenness.

Sitting down hastily, he rapped on the table loudly and impatiently, and ordered a bottle of spirits. He poured out and drank half a dozen glasses in quick succession, and then his face assumed so horrible an expression that it startled even the callous *habitués* of the café. Oblivious of their looks, Hassan

hastily left the concert room, and pushed his way through the main street of Galata and over the bridge, now almost deserted, and walked direct to the konak of Midhat Pasha.

If a man is to be judged by his abode, Midhat must have been free from many Turkish prejudices. The konak resembled a European villa rather than the prison, or fortress, ordinarily representing an opulent Turkish habitation. No high thick walls surrounded it. The garden was gay with flowers and grass plots. The house was large, but only one story high. Below, was a spacious vestibule, with the servants' rooms on either side, in front a broad staircase, which led up to the Selamlik, consisting of two saloons, one blue, one red. The first looked towards Stamboul, the second towards the Sea of Marmora. The ministers had met together in the latter, which was 30 feet long by 15 feet broad. A candelabrum, with forty wax lights, was suspended over an oval table, on which lay some richly-bound French books. The sofas and arm-chairs,

on which the guests sat, were covered with red silk.

The ministers present were — Ruchdi, Hussein Avni, Kaiserli, Midhat, Rachid, with other high functionaries.

The *séance*, which commenced at ten, had been interrupted for half an hour, and the guests, at the time this unexpected addition was to be made to their company, were refreshing themselves with ices and coffee.

Hassan entered at half-past ten.

"What do you want?" asked the porter.

"I leave early to-morrow morning for Bagdad. I have an urgent communication to make to Avni Pasha. I must see him at once."

"It is impossible for the moment. But sit down, refresh yourself, and wait."

But instead of taking a seat, the Circassian walked up and down the room with long strides. The hall servants regarded him with curiosity a moment; then, with Oriental apathy, paid no further attention to his movements, and fell asleep, leaving

Hassan to mount the staircase unhindered. At the top, however, he was challenged by Midhat's valet, who was posted in an ante-chamber.

"I want the Seraskier," said Hassan, addressing this man. "My business is important. Time presses. Take him these papers. He will see me at once."

Scarcely had he gone on his errand, when Hassan opened the door of the red saloon.

"*Yassack!* Forbidden!" cried the servant inside.

But Hassan had seen the position of the ministers. Midhat was seated on a sofa on the right, and was speaking to Avni, who was comfortably reposing in an arm-chair. The rest sat in a semi-circle.

Without waiting for the return of the valet, or heeding the obstruction of the servant inside, Hassan opened the door, and, muffled in his big cloak, he went straight to the Seraskier, who, on receiving the papers from the valet, had risen and was going out to the Circassian.

Hassan made a grave and respectful salute. Then, suddenly, with a revolver in his right hand, he advanced on the War Minister.

"Seraskier!" he cried, imperiously. "Do not stir." And he fired his revolver at Avni's breast.

Avni was wounded, but not mortally. With desperate energy he threw himself on the assassin, but receiving a second ball, he fell motionless on the floor.

It was a scene of wild confusion. The guests precipitated themselves into the blue room adjoining, with the exception of Rachid Pasha and Ahmed Kaiserli. Midhat flew into the harem to arm himself.

Hassan quickly disposed of Rachid, with two successive shots of his revolver. But Kaiserli, with heroic courage, threw himself, all unarmed as he was, on the murderer, and grappling with him, seized his right arm, which, in spite of age and weakness, he held as in a vice. But Hassan, drawing his kama, the favourite weapon of the Circassians, a long, triangular, and broad-bladed dagger,

from his belt with his left hand, dealt Kaiserli three terrible blows in the back, neck, and shoulder, and cut off one of his ears.

Kaiserli, weakened by loss of blood, was obliged to let go his hold. With great difficulty he tottered to the adjoining room, where the ministers were huddled together, stupefied and trembling. He would not have got inside had not a diversion been made in his favour. At that moment Ahmed Agha—a favourite page of Midhat's, a youth of rare beauty—threw a stiletto at the murderer, wounding him slightly, but was immediately shot down by Hassan.

In the meantime, the Seraskier, stupefied with wounds but courageous to the last, was staggering slowly to the door. He had just reached it, when Hassan, seeing his prey escaping, caught him up at a bound. Then an atrocious scene was enacted in the blood-bespattered chamber. Hassan was no longer a man; he had become a wild beast. He could have despatched his enemy with one shot of his revolver. But that would not have

sufficed for his vengeance. He wished to glut himself with the last agonies of his victim. With his terrible kama he gashed the face of Avni, cut off his jaw, and ripped open his abdomen.

The ministers inside did not lose one detail of this fearful drama. For the butcher flung a fresh insult at his victim with each stroke of the kama. "Dog!" he cried, "die like a dog! Hell gapes for you! And Aziz' soul is satisfied."

Through the door, the Grand Vizier Ruchdi implored Hassan, in the most tender and endearing words, to spare the Seraskier. "*Etmé ogloum*," he said, "*sené af edereum*. Spare him, my son, spare him, my lamb, all shall be pardoned you."

These entreaties, these promises of pardon fell on deaf ears. Hassan threw himself with fresh fury on his enemy, plunging his dagger again and again in his heart. When the unfortunate Seraskier had expired, the Circassian turned his rage against the corpse of Rachid Pasha, and with one sweep of his kama nearly severed his head from his body.

Then he rushed at the door of the blue room, where the ministers had taken refuge. Happily for them it was solid. In his impotent rage he fired shot after shot at the panels. Several balls penetrated into the room, without, however, wounding anyone. Then, seeing that there was no one else to kill, he rushed towards the staircase. There he met Chukri Bey, Kaiserli's aide-de-camp. This Chukri was a brave officer, who had retired a few minutes before Hassan entered. When he returned, the scared domestics reported what had happened. He hastened upstairs, and when he saw Hassan he drew his sword and advanced resolutely towards the murderer.

But Hassan was too quick for him; a ball struck Chukri Bey on the head, and he rolled headlong down the staircase.

The soldiers and the police who had hastened from the neighbouring station were furious with the assassin. But their fury passed all bounds when the Circassian, reaching the court below, a revolver in each hand, fired at them, killing one and grievously

wounding another. A cry was raised to take Hassan alive, but on the desperate assassin preparing to fire again, the soldiers pierced him through and through with bayonet thrusts, and indeed they were only able to seize him when he was exhausted with loss of blood.

They dragged him into the garden, where they bound him firmly to a tree. On searching him, they found his dagger, three revolvers, and thirty-five cartridges. The assassin was then conveyed to the infirmary of the Seraskierat, about 300 yards from Midhat Pasha's konak. There Hassan rejected the offices of the surgeon. "What does it matter to me? I am revenged. I know what fate awaits me."

The next day a council of war was called. Hassan refused to reply to the questions put to him. As his judges insisted, he became furious and loaded them with insults. "Do you think," he cried, "that I am like one of those dogs with human faces, who speak like women, and betray their secrets? Kill me, that is all I ask of you."

During the night the murderer died while undergoing torture, and next morning, at daybreak, his corpse was hung on an old mulberry tree, which grows in the court of the Seraskierat.

CHAPTER XIX.

In spite of the unfavourable conditions with which Murad was surrounded, and the rapid successive shocks he had received, it is certain that he was only suffering from a temporary aberration of intellect. His outbreaks of folly became less outrageous; his lucid intervals more frequent. Had it not been for the quack Capoleone, and the fanatic dervish, his recovery would have been rapid. But the dervish, who had acted wisely at first, gave the reins to his fanaticism, and darkened the mind of the unhappy monarch with the terrors of superstition. He poured into Murad's mind stories of malignant genii, of enchantments, of possession by devils, the influence of the evil eye, with a medley of other fantastic superstitions, which, unsettled as the Sultan's intellect then was, filled him with secret terror. Profiting by

his moments of returning sanity, he did make efforts to shake off these influences, and to some extent he succeeded. He was not, however, so successful in ridding himself of the idea that public opinion had branded him with the murder of his uncle. He had, besides, contracted a hatred of Midhat, whom so lately he admired. He fathomed the unscrupulous statesman's motives. He felt instinctively that Midhat was somehow implicated in the murder of his uncle, and recoiled from the prospect of having him as a political adviser.

In one of his lucid intervals he had consented to see Ruchdi and Midhat; and it was on this occasion that his injudicious downrightness of speech brought about a crisis in his history.

Midhat's sagacity was entirely at fault in regard to the Sultan's attitude of mind towards himself. He believed that Murad imputed the murder to Avni alone; and now that the latter had disappeared from the scene, Midhat felt sure that the Sultan, with whom he had always been a favourite, still regarded

his model Minister of Reform as his mentor and friend.

He did not notice how Murad shuddered as he approached.

"If we have been deeply grieved," said Midhat, "that your Majesty has suffered so much, we are all the more rejoiced to see that you are looking yourself again. Before long, we hope that you will once more resume your duties as sovereign."

"I shall never be myself again," answered Murad gloomily.

"You are far too desponding, Majesty," said Ruchdi, cheerfully.

"No. I am not fit for the burden of sovereignty. Every evil has been thrust upon me; disaster after disaster, Russian threats, insurrections, Bulgarian massacres, ruined finances, and far worse than all, I have to bear the contempt of Europe. It is too much."

But Midhat answered with spirit, "Shake off these gloomy fancies, Majesty. Be great in action as you have been great in thought. Do not let the world see that you distrust

yourself. Meet the Russian with boldness, and outbrag the Muscovite bragger. Show that you are ready to introduce reforms such as Europe wishes for. Then the Western nations, who think that Turkey is growing old and decrepit, will borrow fresh courage from your attitude, and dare to defy their common enemy."

But the Sultan, pressed down by the load of his incapacity and by distrust of his unscrupulous adviser, could not rise to this energetic appeal.

"It's no use," he cried out, "I am not fit to govern—I shall resign the throne."

"Your Majesty is far too modest," answered Ruchdi. "You are young, without experience; but we are here to give you advice and to act for you. Do you not know that you are beloved by the people? How they would grieve if you abandoned your post?"

But Ruchdi only stirred up afresh the Sultan's hallucination.

"It's not true," he broke out hysterically. "The people hate me. Wherever I go I

see them pointing at me as the murderer of my uncle. The European press—the Courts of Europe—are ringing with it. My good name, which was the watchword of hope and progress, is as black as hell."

"May it please your Majesty," said Midhat, "this is pure fantasy."

"The late Sultan was not murdered," remarked Ruchdi; "seventeen of the most honourable physicians in this city have certified to his having committed suicide."

"What more evidence could your Majesty have?" said Midhat.

"Lies! Lies! Lies! He was not a man to commit suicide. It was that vile wretch, Avni, who murdered him; and you, Midhat, you abetted him; or, at least, consented to the murder. You wanted to save your own neck, which was in danger. You knew that Abdul Aziz was loved by the people, and you feared a counter-revolution."

An expression of surprise, quickly repressed, passed over Midhat's face.

"The late Sultan," he answered, calmly, "was *not* loved by his people. The crisis

was inevitable, and we could not have prevented it."

"Say what you will, you cannot deceive me. I am resolved to abdicate. Let them name my successor, and let me live in France or Italy. I have had enough of this existence. I will end it." And rising abruptly, he left them, and shut himself up in his harem in a state of uncontrollable agitation.

The two ministers exchanged glances, but kept silent for some moments after Murad had left them. Midhat, nothing disconcerted, lit a cigarette, and as he watched the clouds of smoke floating upwards and dissolving in air, a cynical smile rose on his lips, as the passing vapours, breaking up into a hundred fantastic shapes, suggested not only the ministerial changes which were ever forming into fresh combinations and disappearing, but the transient and treacherous duration of Turkish sovereignty. Poor Murad! How quickly his reign would end in smoke. A better fate, he thought, awaited himself. A new idea had come to him, which he kept to himself.

At length he said very drily : " This is all the thanks we are likely to get, Ruchdi, for risking our skins in Murad's service."

Ruchdi coughed and wiped his watery eyes. " He is perfectly helpless and unfit to govern. That is certain. But then we don't want another Abdul Aziz. You said yourself that a strong Sultan was not needed, but a *Roi faineant*, like this one. We can gradually transform Murad into a cypher."

" I said so. But this is not a *Roi faineant*. His mind is deranged at present, but his illness is perfectly curable. Once cured, I can see clearly that he will be led away by his education and his Giaour friends' advice, and follow in the footsteps of his father with such exaggerated strides, that we shall not be able to overtake him. In a word, he will try to upset the Turkish constitution altogether."

Ruchdi looked troubled. " I do not think," he said, with an uneasy look at Midhat, " that he will ever go so far as that. What vexes him is that affair of the suicide. I always told you that you went too far."

" Aha," thought Midhat. " Sits the wind in

that quarter." But he answered with an air of indifference: "You know, Ruchdi, we had to choose between deposing the Sultan or taking up our sleeping-quarters in the Bosphorus."

"Well, well, that is all over. You say that Murad's madness is subsiding, and that his lucid intervals are becoming more frequent. Let us see what turn events will take, before we decide on any course of action."

"Let it be so, then," answered Midhat, regarding his colleague with half-closed eyelids. "The old fox," he thought, "wants to keep Murad in power so that he may retain his Grand Vizierate, no matter what becomes of Midhat. We shall see about that." He saluted Ruchdi and left the palace.

Seating himself in his carriage, he was soon buried in profound meditation. He perceived clearly that his hopes with Murad were over. The rash Sultan had accused him of complicity in, or at least of tacitly consenting to Abdul Aziz' murder, and he had made no allusion to Ruchdi as being an accomplice. Now was Midhat's time,

or never. He must harden his heart and throw aside all scruples. Bubbling up in his mind rose thought after thought, scheme after scheme, and all these thoughts and all these schemes pointed to the dethronement of Murad and the Grand Vizierate for Midhat. How could he bring it about? This passing sickness of Murad's was a sharp weapon which Fate had put into his hand to give the Sultan his death-stroke. While the monarch's mind was still unsettled, he would stir up rumours that his sickness would be fatal, or would at least result in fixed insanity. He smiled to himself, as a fresh idea came into his mind. Capoleone was a tool ready made for his hands. He could be frightened or bribed to serve his interests. Then the Sheik-ul-Islam. That would be more difficult, for the Sheik was favourable to Murad. But self-interest was paramount with the prelate, and when he saw that Murad's deposition was inevitable, he would bow down before the rising sun; and that rising sun, as seen through the smoke vapours, was the Sultan's brother, Abdul Hamid, who

would not refuse the crown if it were put within his reach. And then the new monarch would not fail to reward the brilliant statesman to whom his ambition was so much indebted, and whose genius for government was so necessary for the reform and the preservation of the empire. Yes, Hamid must replace his brother. And having made up his mind, Midhat promptly directed his coachman to drive to Prince Hamid's konak.

CHAPTER XX.

PRINCE ABDUL HAMID, round whom Fate was weaving all this web of intrigue, was the third son of Sultan Abdul Mejid. He was born on the 22nd September, 1842, of an Armenian mother, and his appearance has little in common with that of his father or his uncle, Abdul Aziz. Indeed, he bears but slight resemblance to the robust typical Turk. Spare, nervous, swarthy, with great mobility of feature, he was, his Armenian nose apart, rather the type of the Arab. His face, marked with lines of thought, bore a pronounced expression of melancholy, and his eyes, a greyish black, were at once profound, restless and suspicious. His nose was of the exaggerated Armenian type, his mouth large, and his under lip protruding. His physiognomy was remarkable, intellectually and physically, and

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expressed many varying and contradictory possibilities of good and evil. Indeed those flashes of insight, followed by collapse of will, the indecision and want of continuity in action which have characterized his reign, those long fits of mental despondency, alternating with periods of energetic effort, showed that tenacity of purpose and courage alone were lacking to make him a great sovereign.

Too far removed from the chance of succession to the throne, Abdul Hamid had enjoyed, during the reign of Abdul Aziz, a life of freedom. Unfettered by the strict rules of Oriental ceremony, he had lived in ceaseless ease, little dreaming of the high destiny to which he was to be called. During his youth he gave himself up to the most vulgar debauchery, and utterly neglected those studies and occupations fitted for a young prince. His profligacy was so open, and so cynical, that Scutari and the neighbourhood around still preserve the recollection of it.

But suddenly, when his health began to fail, and alarm his attendants, he checked his headlong career, and brusquely and radically reformed his manner of living. His orgies were changed to prayers; his boon companions were replaced by the most grave and fanatical of the old Turkey party. The rustling of silks and the black eyes of the Asiatic houris were put aside for the society of his wife and his children. He no longer wore the showy dress of a Turkish prince, but affected the sober *dolma* and the pelisse of the Imam. He altered everything except his exaggeration, which carried him from an extreme laxity of morals to the extremity of austerity and sobriety practised by the old school of Turks, and earned for himself the reputation of being a hardened fanatic.

The prince was well aware of the events which were happening in the palace, and of the political troubles which were hanging over the country. He foresaw that a change was at hand. However much he may have repressed the thought, his mind would still dream of sovereignty. In his

vision he saw a new heaven and a new earth; a new Constantinople in all the fairy sunlight of fancy; order, benevolence, peace, rising out of the ruins of the old empire, and a figure wearing a royal diadem, whose features bore a striking resemblance to his own. He was a firm believer in the power of fate. If he were called upon to save the empire, Murad, who had broken with the old Turkish traditions, must be removed. Brother or no brother, who was he to resist the course of events? But there should be no bloodshed. God forbid!

This vision of sovereignty was ever present before his imagination, but it was often clouded over. He knew his brother's idiosyncrasy. He divined that Murad's aberration of intellect was only temporary. And when he recovered, *adieu* to Abdul Hamid's dreams of greatness. But then—was Allah going to leave the empire to its fate? It could never be that Murad, a Giaour at heart, should be entrusted with the destinies of a great Mussulman power. Either the empire must fall, or Abdul Hamid

must reign. In some mysterious way, which of course would leave him irresponsible, Allah would bring about the deposition of Murad, and set the God-fearing Abdul Hamid in his place.

The Prince was in the society of two sainted dervishes, and was occupied in studying the text of the Koran, when Midhat entered.

The minister apologized for disturbing the Prince's religious meditations. The object of his visit was of great moment, and concerned the good of the country. It was no less important a matter than to offer him the regency of the country while his brother's malady lasted.

"Allah forbid," cried Hamid, shrinking back, "that I should take the power from Murad! I cannot entertain your proposal."

"Your Highness must know that he is incapable of governing."

"The regency," replied the Prince, "has never existed in the family of Osman. It is contrary to the *Cheriat*. Besides that," he added, with an outward calm which belied

his inward agitation, "the illness of the Sultan is only temporary."

"No, Prince, it is not. His illness is incurable, and he is not fit to govern. He is not an Abdul Hamid. Before his accession he squandered his energies in riot, while you have been fortifying yours with meditation, prayer, and holy company. Would that Turkey had you for its sovereign."

Hamid darted a quick penetrating glance at the speaker. "And Midhat Grand Vizier, he might have added," thought he.

"I must tell your Highness the whole truth," continued Midhat. "Your brother is suffering from softening of the brain. His case is hopeless, and a political crisis is at hand. The ambassadors are unable to present their letters of credit. Servia and Montenegro, who are only the scouts of the Northern Colossus, are on the point of declaring war. Our finances are bankrupt, and, worst of all, the Western powers, believing that our Government is no longer capable of maintaining order, insult our pride by dictating what we ought to do to our

Christian subjects. Prince Hamid, you will be responsible if you leave the sceptre of the Osmans in the hands of a madman. At such a crisis you must accept the Regency. Sacrifice your love of religious contemplation for the welfare of your country."

Abdul Hamid had darted more than one rapid glance at Midhat during his appeal. Then, after a pause, he spoke, as he usually did when his mind was made up, in a clear, sonorous voice,—

"Supposing that I overcome the hesitation I have of accepting power under such disastrous and distressing conditions, my first objection still holds good. A regency is against the law of God."

"Then would your Highness consent to become Padishah during the lifetime of the Sultan; not for your own sake, but to redeem your royal line from the charge of imbecility, and for the good of the land and the glory of Islam?"

Hamid glanced uneasily at the speaker, then quickly averted his gaze.

"If you refuse it, if your gentleness shrinks

from deposing your father's son, still your brother shall never reign as Sultan. We will—we must put another in his place. We have no alternative. But I pray your Highness no longer—"

"Stop, Midhat, if you will force me to be Sultan, I yield. I cannot oppose my fate. But if hereafter reproach should blacken my name for deposing my brother, the responsibility will rest with you. I make one condition. It must be proved that the malady of my brother is incurable. My conscience revolts at the idea of superseding Murad, until I am positively assured of his incapacity—"

Conscience, laughed Midhat to himself. What has a Sultan to do with conscience? "Capoleone, your Highness, is my authority for saying that his head is affected, and that he has only six months longer to live."

"Capoleone's opinion is not of sufficient weight. Let the most celebrated authority in Europe be sent for. Then, after hearing his opinion, we shall be better able to judge."

"Your Highness shall be obeyed. A specialist shall be sent for at once, and may Allah guide him and us to a right decision." He saluted with profound respect, and left the Prince in uneasy meditation.

CHAPTER XXI.

FROM Prince Hamid, Midhat went straight to the Sheik-ul-Islam. The prelate amply justified the minister's description of him. His soft insinuating voice, his expression of profound cunning, were in harmony with his supple character and his skill in inventing new forms of casuistry and giving the Koran a new twist to meet each emergency. As to the rest, he was neither ill-natured nor unpatriotic, when it did not interfere with his own interests.

Midhat made his excuses for not having been to see the Sheik before.

"Do not excuse yourself," said the Sheik softly, "for not having been to see me, but rather excuse me for not having been to see you. It is my loss, for he who speaks of Midhat speaks of a man who has the power to instruct others."

"It is a State matter."

"Say on, Midhat. Between friends there can be no reserve. My first duty, above everything else, is to the State; and even if it were not, the profound attachment I have to your person makes the most insignificant of your words interesting to me." He stopped and gave a questioning glance at Midhat.

"It is of the Padishah."

"You cannot speak of a matter which is more sweet to my heart and salutary to my soul. He is Caliph, or the Vicar of the Prophet, as the Prophet is the Vicar of God."

"Hairullah Effendi," said Midhat abruptly, "Murad is mad, and must be deposed. We need your help."

The Sheik looked troubled; reflected some moments, then looked searchingly at his visitor. He was puzzled that the minister, whose opinions were to a certain extent so much in accord with Murad's, should think of deposing such a Sultan.

"I have heard of his illness," said the Sheik sanctimoniously, "but the temporary loss of his faculties is, I believe, but a trial sent to humble him, and teach him dependence on Allah."

Midhat looked at the Sheik and laughed outright. "You are not in the pulpit, Hairullah Effendi! I think that we may speak together like men of common sense."

The Sheik's face relaxed into a most unsanctimonious grin.

"You are," said Midhat, resuming his serious manner, "one of those rare men who force fortune to favour them, by accommodating themselves to the times. When the empire was breaking up through the folly and extravagance of Abdul Aziz, you were the first to see that the growing intelligence of the Turkish students, and the pressure of Europe, required a more liberal and capable ruler. We thought we had found such a one in Murad. But now at the moment when his energies are most urgently needed, he loses his wits. *Autre circonstance : autre tactique.* Murad must be deposed, and another ruler

chosen. We count on your intelligence, and look to you for help."

"But Murad, I am informed," answered the Sheik uneasily, "has already become calmer; he will recover. Besides that, he is popular and beloved by the common people, to whom the person of the Padishah is sacred. I cannot issue a *Feṭva* for his deposition."

"You issued one in the case of Abdul Aziz."

"But he was ruining the country with his folly and extravagance. The *Cheriat* authorizes us to depose a monarch who is guilty of such crimes. This case is wholly different."

"This case is worse. Murad is incapable of giving attention to State affairs, and even if he recover, he will be regarded by all but the rabble as a mischievous innovator and a destroyer of Turkish institutions; and the empire under him would be a prey to endless revolutions and conspiracies. What good results could follow from having a Free-thinker and a Freemason at the head of an

Oriental government? His innovations would, for one thing, certainly ruin your influence."

"But," interrupted the Sheik, "were you not in favour of radical reforms?"

"Yes, such as are necessary. But this madman wants to destroy everything—Turkish caste, Turkish privileges, everything that makes a nation of us. Let us act together in our mutual interest, and offer our services to Abdul Hamid, who, by the way, is just as good an actor as you are. If we bring persuasion to bear on him, his love of power and his avarice will effectually dispel any remaining qualms of conscience in regard to his brother's dethronement. He will see that the crown was not Murad's destined portion, but was kept for his own especial share. Then, by the help of European influence, we can bring pressure to bear on the new monarch, and induce him to consent to carry out just such reforms as are absolutely necessary, without doing away with the rights of the Ottoman, and, of course, consistent with our personal advantage."

The Sheik looked thoughtful. "I must assure myself of the truth of your reports. If Murad is really mad, no doubt he must be set aside. It is contrary to the letter of the religious law, but it is in accord with its spirit."

"It is the letter which killeth," said Midhat, with an ironical laugh, as he took his leave. "May Allah direct your thoughts aright."

The Sheik did not delay to inform himself of the state of affairs, and of the sentiments of the members of the Government. Finding that the ministerial tide had turned against Murad, he determined, not without some regret, to go with the stream. He issued a Fetva for the deposition of the Sultan.

CHAPTER XXII.

ABOUT this time Capoleone was summoned to Midhat's presence.

"What does he want with me?" the charlatan asked himself, on his way thither. "Is it about Murad's illness?" His conscience, or rather the fear which took its place, was roused by the many protests made against his capacity and his treatment of the Sultan, and he entered Midhat's konak in a state of considerable perturbation, which was not diminished as he encountered the Minister's searching look.

"You know why you have been sent for?"

"No, your Excellency."

"Then, to come to the point at once, you will have to give an account of your stewardship. I am dissatisfied with your treatment of the Sultan."

"It is not to you, Excellency, that I have

to give an account," said the quack, trying to assume a courage he was far from feeling. "His mother entrusted him to my care, and I have her full confidence."

"Ah!" exclaimed Midhat, with ominous quietness, which frightened Capoleone all the more. "You do not recognize my authority then? I have no power at the palace, it seems?"

"Yes, Excellency," answered Capoleone, trembling.

"Ah! you have thought better of it. Answer my questions. Since when have you acted as mentor to this young Prince?"

"Since he was fourteen."

"You will admit, I suppose, that your course of education has not been very judicious?"

"Pardon, Excellency, it was not for me to dictate to the young Prince."

"You might have restrained his excesses. You might have imitated Mavrojeni Pasha, who knew how to put a curb on his pupil, Abdul Hamid. Say rather that you wanted to curry favour with the young Prince and

his mother at the same time. You gave license to the one and told lies to the other that you might draw profit from both."

"I! Excellency?"

"These things are known, and the result was that your pupil came to the throne with nerves shattered and a mind wholly enervated. I need not remind you that you have had sole charge of him during his illness."

"I have, Excellency. It is an honour I have striven to deserve."

"Deserve, indeed! Then you will be able to account for the result of your treatment better than that of your guardianship? You look embarrassed. Shall I account for it? Or shall the Sultan's madness answer for you? What have you done, or rather, what have you left undone? What follies, what quackeries have you not practised? What remedies have you rightly administered? What resources of ignorance have you left untried? You are a charlatan—an impostor—a failure."

Capoleone turned very white and cast a vicious glance at his accuser.

"Your comedy is at an end. You have sucked Murad and his mother like a vampire. I do not blame you much for that. But that you should have ruined the health of the future Sultan is unpardonable, and it will not be pardoned. Your dismissal is imminent."

"I—I—have done my duty," stammered Capoleone, "and—"

"And you would be such a loss to the palace," sneered Midhat; then, with a rapid and threatening change of voice, he added, "A word from me and your services will be dispensed with."

Capoleone, utterly discomfited, did not answer a word.

"We will give you fair play. A celebrated Vienna *alieniste* will arrive here shortly. If," continued he very drily, "he approves of your treatment, you will have our approval. "If not—" he paused and fixed a grim look on the trembling quack.

"Is—he—really—coming?"

"He is."

Capoleone fell at Midhat's feet, after Turkish fashion, and cried abjectly for pardon.

So, thought Midhat, the rascal is ripe for my purpose.

"Compose yourself, Capoleone. Men, ignorant of the art of government, have called me cruel, unscrupulous, ruthless. I am so to those who cross my will. To those who serve me, I am as a Providence. Will you serve me?"

"I, Excellency? Oh! try me."

"Listen. Again I say I have been misjudged. I am above all things a patriot. For my country and for her good, I would sacrifice everything; I would dare everything. Her state is desperate, and I have to use desperate remedies. I had hopes of Murad, but he is incapable and stands in the way of wiser men. He must be deposed. You, unconsciously, have aided me hitherto, for he has become madder than ever since you attended him. Aid me now, consciously. You thought I meant you mischief, but I mean you good. If you obey me, you shall be as rich as your heart can desire."

"What do you want me to do?" asked

Capoleone, bewildered at Midhat's sudden change of front.

"Murad must not recover from his madness—that is, in the eyes of the public."

"But how can it be done, Excellency? You know that he has many friends among the Freemasons and among the Young Turkey party. If they insist on seeing him, the truth must leak out."

"It shall not. This publicity, which is in fashion in Europe, is not in accord with the spirit of Eastern governments. The Mussulman mind is accustomed to surround the Sultan with a mysterious prestige, and draws a veil over all his acts and his personality. Once remove this veil, once let the Sultan appear as a common man, and there is an end of the Ottoman rule. We will take care to keep all these Europeans at a distance. This is what I would have you do. You will write to two of the clerical journals in the south of France, giving an account of Murad's state of health and mind. Say that he is a republican at heart, a freethinker, a loose liver, and that his debaucheries have

brought about a softening of the brain, and that speedy death will be the result. Do not forget to emphasize that his illness is incurable. And, look you, you may say that he is tortured by remorse at the death of his uncle. These letters will create an immense sensation, and probably provoke comment in the European press. Some indeed will advise that he be forced to resign his crown."

"But, Excellency, I dare not do this. It is more than my life is worth."

"Fool. Will the letters appear in your handwriting or be signed by you? It may be suspected that you, or some one else who has an exact knowledge of the Sultan's state, may have written them, but it cannot be proved. Do this at once and you shall be satisfied with your reçompense. Let me know when it is done."

Capoleone went out of Midhat's presence perplexed and trembling. Should he undertake Midhat's commission? Or should he fly the country and avoid risk? But the reward? His eyes glistened as he thought of it. But

the poor Sultan! What of him? Oh, bah! If he refused to ruin Murad, some one else would not, and he would be all the poorer. In any case the Padishah would be got rid of. "It is a queer world," he soliloquized. "I cannot make anything out of it, except this, that honesty is not a paying virtue."

Capoleone went straight homewards and at once wrote the fatal letters as he had been instructed to do.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOME days after Capoleone's interview with Midhat, the advice was sought of Dr. Leidersdorf, the celebrated *alieniste* from Vienna, who without delay repaired to Constantinople.

At first Sultan Murad looked on his new adviser with suspicion, and saluted him coldly; but thawed by the doctor's genial expression and benevolent smile, he at length regarded him with more confidence.

Dr. Leidersdorf listened attentively and sympathetically to his royal patient's description of his physical sufferings and hallucinations, and, speaking with all the authority of his professional skill and long experience, he succeeded in convincing the Sultan that he might safely and hopefully trust himself in his hands. He dwelt emphatically on the fact that the full and exact analysis which

the Sultan had given of his own case, proved most conclusively that his mind was perfectly sane, and that his constitution only required perfect rest and freedom from the cares of State to be thoroughly re-established. He added adroitly that his professional reputation was at stake in the matter, and that this must not be the first time in his life that he had undertaken anything which had not turned out a success. He expressed a lively indignation at the treatment to which Murad had been subjected under the advice of the Neapolitan quack, and as indignantly refused to have a consultation with him. Dr. Leidersdorf insisted that this dishonest practitioner should not be allowed to interfere with his treatment, and indeed he strongly recommended Murad to get rid of him at once and finally. Then, strictly forbidding any further leeching or hot bathing, he proposed that his patient should take advantage of the fine weather, and make daily excursions on the Bosphorus or the Sea of Marmora.

It may be imagined how astounded the

Vienna physician was at this treatment. His quick professional eye had at once detected that the poor Sultan had only been suffering from intense nervous irritability and temporary mental derangement, and the wretched quack had been treating him for inflammation of the brain, ignorant that every disease has its double. The charlatan had failed to distinguish the difference between the real and the counterfeit.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

When Midhat and the Sheik-ul-Islam waited on Abdul Hamid, they were struck with the air of fatigue and the sombre melancholy painted on his countenance. Prince Hamid had sought an interview with the Vienna expert, and since then his mind had been tossed to and fro by a succession of doubts and anxieties. Finally it had succumbed to one of those attacks of despair to which he was subject. He had shut himself up in his harem in a state of mental derangement which, while it lasted, was just as marked as that of his unfortunate brother. Unlike him, however, his nerves had never been so cruelly tried. He rallied quickly from this attack, at least so far as to throw off the worst effects of it, and to receive his visitors with a sufficient degree of composure.

"I have seen Dr. Leidersdorf," he began, "and he states positively that my brother's malady is curable. But Dr. Capoleone affirms exactly the contrary. You, Midhat, who know so much of Murad, and whose sagacity is so profound, can tell me what conclusion you have drawn from these opposite opinions."

"I can only say, Highness, that Capoleone, who has known the Sultan from childhood, is convinced that Dr. Leidersdorf, in spite of his cleverness, is deceived by the cunning of a madman, who, like most lunatics, has taken a hatred to those who are his best friends, and will have nothing to do with his ancient mentor. That opinion is shared by all the officials of the palace."

Prince Hamid darted an anxious, distrustful glance at Midhat. "It would be grievous for me," he said, "to infringe on my brother's rights."

"It would be a great grief for us too," answered Midhat, "but, unfortunately, a madman has no rights."

"Are you sure of what you say?" asked

Hamid, glancing again distrustfully at Midhat.

"What need of repetition, Prince? I am convinced. You, yourself, have seen him and noted how his mind is unhinged. You have heard, too, how he threw over the staircase a woman who was looking at one of the officers of the guard, and nearly killed her; and how, in his insane fear of fire, he broke a chair over the head of a slave, who did not carry his candle in a vase of water, according to his instructions. What further proofs do you need?"

But Prince Hamid was still troubled. If temporary prostration of intellect and intense nervous irritability were signs of confirmed madness, he was mad too. If he had been in Murad's place, constantly thwarted by the intrigues of the palace, delivered over to the tender mercies of an Italian charlatan, as Dr. Leidersdorf called Capoleone, his nerves would have given way also. A pang of conviction pierced his heart, and his answer to Midhat was confused and unintelligible.

But Midhat did not give him time to hesi-

tate. "Prince," he said, "the crisis through which the empire is passing has become more pressing. Grave European complications are gathering in the distance, and our internal political troubles are drawing to a head. Already the clerical journals in the south of France have begun to comment on Murad's imbecility, and the European press is sure to follow with remarks on the incapacity of the Turks for government. If you do believe in your mission, as I believe in it, you must change your doubt to resolution, and act at once. We need a head, and you are the head we need. In any case the ministers and the nation have determined not to be ruled by a Giaour who would upset all Turkish traditions, and establish a republic of liberty, equality, and fraternity at Constantinople. They have resolved to get rid of Murad. If Abdul Hamid will not take his place, another must. But what does Hairullah Effendi say?"

The Prince glanced uneasily from Midhat to the Sheik-ul-Islam.

"Now, Highness," answered that crafty

prelate, thus mutely appealed to, "I have been taking counsel over this momentous question, and I have assured myself that the *Cheriat* does not permit the deposition of a monarch. There is a verse in the Koran which forbids it" (he paused, an dHamid's face fell). "But I have judged the matter as we must judge all matters, from a larger point of view. Three things are necessary in the ruler of a nation: faith in the traditions of the country he governs, or he ceases to care for its interest; wisdom to frame wise laws, or it becomes disorganized; and virtue, or his example corrupts the mass of the people. Very well, I have not for an instant been able to see that the unfortunate Murad, who is at once insane, sceptical, and corrupt, will be a fit sovereign for us, and as it is clear that the Commander of the Faithful is suffering from aberration of intellect, that verse in the Koran is contrary to logic, and must be interpreted according to the spirit of our religion. And I cannot fail to see that your Highness, who will give us wisdom in place of folly, religion in place of

infidelity, and virtue in the place of corruption, is a fit ruler for us, and I am convinced that if you be raised to the throne we shall have to regret neither our ruined prosperity, our persecuted faith, nor our corrupted morals."

A visible satisfaction spread itself over Prince Hamid's physiognomy as he heard his most innermost ideas expressed and put in their most advantageous light. "But the people," he said, as a painful afterthought struck him, "how will they bear it?"

"If your Highness means the ignorant, thoughtless rabble, for them Murad's reign would mean liberty, equality, fraternity, and freedom from excessive taxation. They are delighted with his liberal gifts and his impracticable notions of government. But when they learn that their popular ruler has become a confirmed lunatic, and has to be kept in confinement, he will soon cease to exist, even in the imagination of the fickle, changing mob. There is another class far more dangerous. This is composed of the Freethinkers inside the Moslem world, of the Freemasons, that mischievous and intriguing

body of men, and of the educated among the Rayah population. For them he will be neither a madman nor a fool, but a martyr, of whom they will cherish an affectionate memory. But this latter class, fortunately, is not in the majority."

"And there are ways of dealing with these Mussulman freethinkers," said Midhat grimly.

Prince Hamid shuddered. "Some of them, at least," he said, "mean well."

"Your Highness," said Midhat coolly, "is young in the art of government. How can we root out conspiracies unless we burn the wet wood with the dry? But go on, Hairullah."

"Lastly, there is the old Turkey party, made up of all true believers, and those who cling to their privileges and traditions. This class will universally condemn Murad for his unpardonable fault of despising a religion on which the power and prosperity of the empire must rest. And they do not hesitate to explain his madness as a visitation from Allah for his sins, and they

naturally hate Murad as hostile to their interests."

"You think, then," said Abdul Hamid, in a faint, indistinct voice, "that he ought to be deposed?"

"God be merciful to me if I am wrong," said the Sheik. "I do think so. It is natural that you should hesitate to take the power from the hands of your own brother. But you cannot resist your fate. Events, prepared by Allah, are forcing you to seize the crown; the present crisis, Murad's madness, the pressure of the Foreign Ambassadors, make it impossible for you to refuse."

Hamid's rapid penetration took in all the bearings of the case. Against Dr. Leidersdorf, there was Capoleone and the rest of the palace. But then there was his own conviction. Deep down in his heart he knew that Murad's illness was only temporary. But was he a free agent? The royal family must, to a certain extent, be the slaves of the ministers. Midhat would assuredly change the succession. If he did not accept the crown, it

would be given to one of his brothers. His strong love of power, his hopes of posing before Europe as a reformer, and yet preserving the traditions of Turkey, his hatred of Murad's ideas, his patriotism, his fatalistic belief in his mission, backed up by the Sheik's specious arguments, rushed upon his mind and broke down all his scruples. He blamed Midhat, but accepted his help. He pitied Murad, but resolved to take his crown. He put his own self-seeking in the background, and said, "I must act for the welfare of Turkey, and sacrifice a fraternal feeling to patriotism."

Midhat watched him attentively. At last he spoke, "We are waiting for your Highness's decision."

"In the name of the prophet," broke out Hamid, "I adjure you to tell me. Is there any hope for Murad?"

"None; absolutely none. We are doing your Highness good service in telling you the truth. He must be deposed. Will you sanction his deposition?

Hamid tried to speak, but the words died

on his lips. At last, in a husky, almost inaudible voice, "Let it be done, then; but no bloodshed, he is my brother."

"There is no need of any," said Midhat, smiling.

Hamid did not answer, but shivering from head to foot, he flung himself on the sofa.

CHAPTER XXV.

AFTER the arrival of Dr. Leidersdorf, a rapid improvement showed itself in the Sultan's health. Murad, who had only been in the habit of leaving the palace on Fridays to attend the Selamlik, now began to make daily excursions on the Black Sea or the Sea of Marmora, drinking in fresh life from the fresh salt breezes.

The Constantinople press, then very much less subject to censorship than it is to-day, published accounts of these daily trips, and the wish was universal that they would have the beneficent effect hoped for. One newspaper alone, inspired by the English Embassy, persisted in asking how it was that the report of Dr. Leidersdorf was not published, and why those daily bulletins, always issued in Europe when

the health of a sovereign is concerned, did not appear.

These questions, were they the outcome of diplomatic inspiration or merely the expression of public feeling, the oligarchical Government of Turkey had its own reasons for not answering. Dr. Leidersdorf's favourable reports, Murad's rapidly-improving health, and the comments of the press, threatened to unhinge Midhat's hopes, and roused the unscrupulous minister to fresh intrigues. If Murad recovered, farewell to all his dreams of greatness; farewell to the prosperity of Turkey, with which his patriotic ambition was identified. The Sultan, haunted by suspicion as to his predecessor's death, would never more regard him with an eye of favour. Should an incapable hypochondriac, like Murad, on whom the lightest cares of empire sat heavily, stand in the way of his advancement? Where was there another head to plan, or another will like his to execute those reforms which alone could raise Turkey to its proper place among the nations of Europe? No! no! He had a

soul, and he dared to act. Murad must go. First he would persuade Ruchdi, whose weak will always yielded to his own, that the traditions of Turkey were threatened by the demands for publicity, and persuade him to conceal, either wholly or partially, the state of matters at the palace.

"So, Ruchdi," said he, "we are no longer to be considered as a nation. We are to be dictated to by these Giaours. We are to break through our time-honoured privileges, and destroy the prestige of the Padishah by exposing the mysteries which surround his person. In a word, we are to be Orientals only in name, and to submit like little children to our schoolmasters—the European powers."

"I always thought you advocated Western ideas?" said Ruchdi, regarding him suspiciously.

"For the protection and preservation of Turkey—yes. She must keep pace with the other European nations in material and moral progress, or she will cease to be a power. I go no further. I reject those sweeping ideas of reforms which Europe

wishes us to adopt; and I hold that, if once we allow the Western nations to interfere, as they are attempting to do now, Turkey will gradually drift under their tutelage."

"Quite right," assented Ruchdi, "we will not give way to European pressure. As to Dr. Leidersdorf's reports, we will only publish part of them, and not issue daily bulletins as to Murad's health. But I hope before long the Sultan will again actively assume power. The real sovereignty, as you have often said, will remain in our hands, and we can carry out as many or as few changes as we think proper."

"You believe, then, in Dr. Leidersdorf's reports?" said Midhat, stealing a keen look at his colleague.

"Why not? He is a most capable man. He says the Sultan can be cured."

"He says so; but Capoleone, who has known him from childhood, affirms that his brain is suffering, and that he will not live six months longer."

"Oh, Capoleone!" laughed Ruchdi.

"But his diagnosis seems correct. He

told us that the Sultan was mad, and so it turned out. He still says so, and that his lucid intervals are misleading Dr. Leidersdorf. He affirms that it is his madman's cunning which has imposed on the Vienna physician."

"Capoleone may be wrong," said Ruchdi, irritably; "and what good will be got by deposing Murad? If the Sultan is replaced by the third son of Abdul Mejid, who is a fanatic, and saturated with the Kôran and *Cheriat*, the new Padishah will not be so manageable as his predecessor."

"Murad must go all the same," thought Midhat; but he answered indifferently, "Of course, if Murad recovers, he must continue to reign."

Midhat had but little difficulty in gaining over the other ministers. They had already had enough of a Sultan who wished to limit their privileges and upset their institutions with his French revolutionary ideas. The wily statesman did not think it necessary to say how far he was influenced by them himself, and when he sounded each member of the

council, he found, as he expected, that their rapacity and exclusiveness would be well content if Murad was replaced by a Padishah whose notions would be more in harmony with their own.

The unfortunate Sultan, entirely at the mercy of his ministers, who alone could work the springs of Government, and of their moving spirit, the Machiavellian Midhat, who desired his downfall, was thus placed in an impossible position. He was just beginning to throw off the illusions of his melancholy, and to recover his physical health, when Midhat, seeing that his royal victim was on the point of escaping him, put forth all his energies, and made use of all the unscrupulous means which his cunning and pitiless nature suggested, to undermine Dr. Leidersdorf's work. He first enlisted Murad's mother on his side, and so worked on her superstition and tenderness that she was induced to entreat her son to listen once more to the advice of Capoleone, and again to accept the society of the holy dervish. Those who know what respect a Turk

bears to his mother can understand how impossible it was for Murad to resist her wishes. And worse still, through the agency of the lugubrious tribe of palace parasites and sycophants, all the disturbing rumours floating in the air, all the malicious remarks on Abdul Aziz' death, real or invented, above all, the base insinuations, inspired by Capoleone, which appeared in the clerical journals in the south of France, and the comments made upon them by the European press, were repeated to the distracted Sultan.

The effect of this subtle persecution was soon apparent. While the Vienna expert built up, Capoleone pulled down. While the former ordered absolute repose for his patient, Murad's monomania was stirred up at each instant by scandal and lies regarding his uncle's fate. The symptoms of nervous irritability, which Dr. Leidersdorf had not had time to cure, broke out again, and perplexed that physician sorely.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE crisis through which Hamid had passed left his mind more lucid and more active than ever. On Midhat's next visit he advanced to meet his minister with a smile and an expression of benevolence. Inviting his guest to be seated in an arm-chair, he sat down beside him on a sofa, and offered him a cigarette.

"You will permit me to congratulate your Highness," said Midhat, "on the decision you have taken. I and my colleagues are only speaking the exact truth and acting sincerely when we hail you as the great hope of the country, and the assured remedy for its manifold evils."

"I thank you, Midhat; you encourage me in the difficult task I have set before myself of regenerating our beloved country, whose

great resources and the good qualities of whose subjects are unknown to strangers."

"Your Highness understands the matter perfectly."

"Those who pretend that the state of Turkey is incurable," continued the Sultan, "wilfully slander it. The country must be a fine one, and its inhabitants a fine race, if Russia is so eager to get it. Her policy only seeks to discredit us, and make us an easier prey."

"Exactly," replied Midhat. "But Turkey has been asleep, and needs to lift herself up to the level of the other nations around her. The abuses in Turkey can be suppressed, and suppressed easily. Only," here he paused, and looked doubtfully at Hamid—"a great difficulty meets us at the outset."

"Speak on, Midhat, a friend's words cannot wound."

"Then, as your Highness wishes me to speak frankly, the great evil under which Turkey groans is that everything depends on the supreme will of the Sultan, and consequently that everything is under his abso-

lute orders, which are generally given by him under a total misapprehension of the facts, or under an impression created by incorrect or false reports. Is a Bulgarian massacre stirred up by Russia? The Sultan is to blame. Does General Ignatieff persuade Mahmud Nedim to repudiate the public debt? Once more the Sultan! Are crimes committed in a remote province? The Sultan! And who but he is made responsible for the flagrant vices of the Turks? Thus the long-standing abuses, the maladministration of provincial governors, and all the accumulated evils of centuries of misrule, fall on the head of a man who is at once innocent of ill-doing, and incapable of preventing it. I hope your Highness does not misunderstand me."

Hamid paused before he answered. To give up the prospect of absolute power, not to decide on every State matter, small and great, was not the sovereignty he dreamt of. But dissimulating his vexation, he replied calmly,—

"I understand perfectly well what you

have said, and I admire the justice of your idea. But what remedies do you propose?"

"I propose, your Highness, to do away with the abject submission of the functionaries which is at the root of this evil. First of all, and above all, the country needs a constitution. When an energetic and capable administration has been created, of which the members have developed, at least, a certain independence of character, Turkey will have made an immense step towards progress. When the constitution is in promulgation we shall be supported by all the liberal spirit of Europe, and the abuses of which Russia makes so free a use will be gradually swept away. The public servants will be responsible for their acts, reforms will be made in the finances, in the courts of justice, in public instruction; roads, harbours, &c., will be constructed throughout the country, and commerce will be encouraged. And thus Turkey will be able, both morally and materially, to raise herself to the level of other countries."

"But would not such an excess of liberty, to which we are not accustomed here, be more dangerous than the absence of it altogether? Liberty, to a people unused to it, is like an edged tool in the hands of a child."

"'Tis well objected, your Highness, but let us at least make a trial of it, so that Europe, especially England, may see that we are in earnest. Indeed," he added, emphatically, "unless your Highness *promises* such a reform, England will not back up your claim to the sovereignty."

Hamid's eyes met those of his Minister with a suspicious, anxious glance.

"But a more formidable objection remains," said he, after a pause. "Our religion is theocratic. It is based on the Koran, as interpreted by the unchangeable dogmas of the *Multeka*, from which there is no appeal. How, then, can any constitution be promulgated which professes to give that equality which is altogether inconsistent with this religious law? Either we cease to be a nation, or we maintain the decrees of Islam,

which change not. You smile, but I do not see my way out of the difficulty."

"Let your mind be at rest, Prince Hamid. These Giaours have the power in their hands, and we must oppose them by craft. We can promise, indeed, but no true believer is bound by a compact of faith with a Giaour. If your Highness will deign to follow me, I will show you how Europe can be satisfied, and how the rights and privileges of Islam can be preserved intact."

"Go on, Midhat."

"Let us imagine that the constitution is promulgated amid the cheers of the people and the thundering salutes of artillery. A grand transformation scene passes before the eyes of the astonished and admiring Europeans. The magician waves his wand and Turkey awakes from her long sleep. Our Government, which the Western nations thought so old and decrepit, rises from its ashes like another phœnix. With one vigorous effort she breaks with her past and establishes a Parliament which prepares the country for reforms and liberal measures

which will put us on a level with the most civilized races. Do you like the picture, Highness?"

"Are you mocking me? How can you carry this out?"

"I cannot carry it out at all. The sick man, as they call Turkey, must be sick indeed if he think about keeping his promises. What I propose is to evade them. I have studied the European, especially the Englishman, from a psychological point of view, and fortunately for us, the English Turkophile is stubbornly incredulous to the clearest evidence against us, and is greedy to swallow any improbabilities against Russia—the *bête noire* of Europe. This being so, I will draw out a constitution which, though it seems to offer the privileges of liberty and justice to the aliens under our rule, will not bind us down to any performance."

"But how? How can you proclaim that all our subjects are equal in the eye of the law?"

"Nothing so easy. Add the words, *without prejudice* to what regards religion, and

the promise is at once null and void. Your Highness knows that religion is everything in Turkey."

"But then you say that any Rayah is eligible for election to Parliament?"

"Of course, we can easily make this of no effect," replied the minister. "We shall insist that no candidate is eligible for the lower house who does not speak the Turkish language. This will be a stumbling-block to the majority. As for any of the others who might prove troublesome, we can, without much trouble, have them condemned by a court of law on some trumped-up charge which will disqualify them for election."

Hamid more than once had darted a rapid, penetrating glance on his adviser, but he did not answer.

"But besides that, your Highness, I intend, with your permission, to propose legislation which will amply protect our privileges."

"You will not make that public?"

"By no means. Not while the Conference is sitting. Afterwards it doesn't matter a straw. In appearance we shall have a com-

plete modern constitution, but the elective bodies, both the Senate and the House of Deputies, will be the nominees and puppets of the Grand Vizier, whose position depends on the absolute will of the Sultan. So, if any attempt is made to introduce serious radical reforms, these can easily be thwarted without the apparent intervention of the sovereign. Thus the administration of Turkey will be kept in the hands of the ruling class, and enough dust will be thrown in the eyes of the Europeans, who will believe, this time, that we are in earnest."

"I am glad to have your opinion," said Abdul Hamid, who, whatever he thought, was far too discreet to protest at that moment. "I will try the Constitution first, then, if that succeeds, I can open my hand little by little, and gradually prepare the country for that independent part which she has to play among the European nations." "When I do assume my functions as Sultan," he added with a smile, as he rose, "I may congratulate myself on having with me one statesman at least who understands the

gravity of the situation, and whose resources are equal to the emergency."

"One other matter remains to be settled. If your Highness has no objection, I give Dr. Leidersdorf his *congé* to-morrow."

The Prince's expression changed suddenly. "You are sure," said he, in a trembling, indistinct voice, "that he can do no good to my unhappy brother?"

"None at all, your Highness; it will be a real charity to relieve Murad from the cares of State."

"Do it, then," said Hamid faintly, averting his face.

CHAPTER XXVII.

WHILE the deposition of the ill-fated Sultan was being thus prepared, in spite of the assurances of ultimate cure given by Dr. Leidersdorf, whose directions were only followed in regard to Murad's daily excursions in the open air, the distinguished physician was informed by Midhat that his services were no longer required. He remonstrated: his patient's health was improving, his ultimate cure certain. It was his duty to protest against Murad being left in the hands of Capoleone, whom he once more denounced as an ignorant quack, and affirmed that he would not answer for the consequences if the Sultan were abandoned to his care. But Midhat assured the doctor that his instructions in regard to the Sultan would be implicitly followed, and that he would be kept quiet and not exposed to

noisy demonstrations or political excitement till mind and body had thoroughly recovered their vigour. He then reminded the expert emphatically of the conditions under which he had been engaged, and the promise he had given not to divulge anything he had seen or heard at the palace. Midhat clenched his argument by handing the doctor so enormous a backsheesh, that the latter was effectually silenced. He contented himself with reiterating his instructions in regard to Murad's *régime*, to which Midhat promised his most careful attention.

Dr. Leidersdorf accepted his big fee and put aside his misgivings. "After all," he thought, "I can do nothing more."

* * * * *

"Your friend is going away, Capoleone," said Midhat with a malicious smile.

"I don't see why he ever came here," answered Capoleone, acidly.

"Why, indeed, when the illustrious Capoleone was on the spot? Unfortunately, Capoleone's fame does not go beyond the

limits of the palace—Dr. Leidersdorf's is European. But when Europe knows that the great Dr. Leidersdorf could not effect a cure, and that the state of the patient is unchanged, then our proceedings will be justified in the eyes of Europe. The Austrian says, indeed, that the state of the Sultan is improving. I do not see any striking change in his mental condition, at any rate."

"There never was any change for the better," replied Capoleone, "but rather for the worse. As I said before, he was attacked with acute inflammation of the brain, which, as a result, is rapidly softening. Hence his apparent tranquillity at times—his nullity, I should rather call it. The end is not far off."

"Dr. Leidersdorf contends," said Midhat, expressly and with irritating frankness, "that this is mere nervous debility. According to him—of course, that is not my opinion—you are a mere charlatan, and the chief cause of the Sultan's illness."

"He says that, does he? After all, what has he done? Has he kept his promise? Has he cured him? Has he brought about

anything but a very superficial improvement in the Sultan's health?"

"He says that is all Murad needs," retorted Midhat.

"Is it? We shall see!"

Midhat put aside his jesting air. "When once Dr. Leidersdorf has gone, you will have the field to yourself. In four days we intend to proclaim the new Sultan. It will be your cue that Murad shows no symptoms of sanity during that interval."

Capoleone gnawed his nails nervously a moment, then an idea flashed across his mind,—

"If Dr. Leidersdorf thinks his patient so nearly cured, and that his nerves have recovered from the shock," said the quack, with a venomous sneer, "we can try the experiment of saluting him as he goes to the Selamlik. When he hears the roar of the cannon and hears them without distress, then we shall know that this Vienna genius is right. If not, the sooner our Sultan is relieved from State cares, the better."

Midhat smiled sardonically. "Quite a

brilliant idea, Capoleone. You really ought to have been a diplomat instead of—ahem—a learned physician. By the help of Allah and your previous ministrations, we shall have the pleasure of seeing how strong his nerves have become again. How the Vienna savant will rejoice!"

Capoleone grinned, a devilish grin; but an afterthought occurred to him: "What will the public say to it?"

"The public," repeated Midhat; "oh! the public. Well, we can say that by order of Dr. Leidersdorf, an experiment is being tried on the nerves of the Sultan."

Capoleone grinned once more malevolently. He made no reply, but bowed and left his new patron, brightened up alike by avarice and the love of vengeance. Was he really to be blamed? He was loyal, according to his lights. He had bowed down before the true Sultan of Turkey—*Backsheesh*—and had only thrown aside his allegiance to the sham one, Sultan Murad. Having once got rid of his lingering scruples of conscience regarding his unfortunate pupil, and written those

iniquitous letters to the clerical journals in the south of France, he had become personally interested in the fall of Murad, and Midhat's hearty co-worker in conspiracy. Besides that, Murad was identified with his failure and wounded *amour-propre*. To him he owed the exposure of his ignorance and the contempt of Dr. Leidersdorf; and thus his feelings towards his patient, never very sympathetic, had passed into a state of hatred. Wounded vanity is so cruel.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE very day that the learned *aliéniste* embarked for Vienna, the artillery of the ships anchored in the Golden Horn thundered forth a succession of salutes as the Imperial caique passed, bearing the Sultan Murad V. to his last Selamlik. The people hailed the deafening clamour as a manifestation of joy at the recovery of their ruler, who had at last thrown off the terrible malady under which his reason had so long been tottering. Loud were the shouts which welcomed him as he landed, many the benedictions which were showered on his head. But great was the astonishment of the crowd when no response was elicited from their well-beloved sovereign. They did not know that ruder throats than theirs had deafened the ears of

the Sultan. At each discharge of the cannon, Murad had started nervously in his seat and shown signs of derangement. He had left the palace in a state of deep depression, dreading to hear the cheers of the people to which he had neither the heart nor the energy to reply, and the noise of the guns upset his nerves altogether and brought on a fresh crisis of mental aberration. He arrived at the landing-place as one stunned, and stepped into his carriage unconscious of the sights or sounds around him. If he heard, he did not heed the demonstrations of the crowd, or note their joyous faces, and he went through the ceremonies of the Selamlik as if he were more dead than alive.

On his return to the palace he was attacked by a violent outbreak of rage, and behaved, as he had done on the occasion of his uncle's death, just like a madman. "You will see," he cried, frantically, to one of his *aides-de-camp*—"I will not bear this much longer. I will kill myself," and his eyes rolled convulsively.

All these symptoms were duly reported to Midhat, who rejoiced at the success of the stratagem. He felt that all was prepared for a second *coup d'état*.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Two days afterwards another cannonade from the vessels in the Bosphorus, and the ships anchored opposite the palace once more struck terror into the hearts of the inhabitants of Pera. But their terror was soon changed to astonishment and grief, as the news spread of the deposition of the Sultan.

Capoleone and his satellites had kept their word. Between them the unhappy Sultan had been driven to the verge of madness, and Midhat and his co-conspirators prepared the closing scene of his reign with great promptitude. The palace was surrounded by troops, soldiers were massed under the windows, the exits were carefully guarded, and all the precautions which had been taken against the brutal and dangerous Abdul Aziz, were employed against his unresisting nephew. Why such an extraordinary display of force

should have been made, or why such serious precautions used against a sovereign who had been declared a hopeless madman, is not exactly clear. Nor does it appear why the invalid, whose speedy cure had but lately been announced, should suddenly be declared incurable, and condemned to eternal seclusion in what was practically a State prison.

An eunuch entered the apartment of Murad, who was already awake, and announced to him that an Irade from the new Sultan, Abdul Hamid, commanded him to leave the palace and go with his family to Top Capou.

Murad heard the news of his deposition with perfect listlessness. He accompanied his guards with a profound apathy and perfect abstraction from all mundane interest. His eyes were open, but their sense was shut. He took no notice of surrounding objects, but slowly and listlessly went with the soldiers who escorted him. He had suffered so long and so keenly that he could suffer little more than a dull sense of despair

and failure. All his aspirations, his high hopes had vanished, and left nothing but a longing for rest and oblivion in some retreat where he could be free from the crushing cares of State, and for ever out of the sight of his tormentors.

And so he passed on in silence to his new abode. He paid no attention to the salute of the sentinels, but went straight to his Haremlik, and, flinging himself on a sofa, sat on in silent apathy.

His mother received the news sadly indeed, but with Oriental resignation. She did not weep or lament, but spoke in a sad, calm voice, "It is the will of Allah." Was it the result of meeting trouble so often? Was it patience or despair? Was she deceived by Midhat, who let her know that, apart from the loss of sovereignty, nothing would be changed in her son's circumstances? Narrow-minded and prejudiced as she was, believing that the Mussulman was the elect of God, and that all other faiths were impure and that it was a sin to sympathize with them, she thought perhaps that Allah had

allowed the demons to take possession of her son, as a punishment for loving the Giaours, and that, in the face of this greater misfortune, the loss of the throne was as nothing.

CHAPTER XXX.

On the morning of the following day, Abdul Hamid, accompanied by his Ministers and a numerous escort, passed through the main street on their way to the Sublime Porte, where he was to be proclaimed Sultan.

No cheer, no joyous demonstration greeted the new monarch. The crowd, composed of such different elements, were united by a common sentiment of dismay. Their hopes had been baffled; their expectations of change and progress had melted away before the pitiful reality which had taken their place, and were followed by that inertness which so easily besets the Oriental, inoculated as he is with the doctrine of fatalism. It had seemed as if Murad had bound Fate to his chariot, and would crush tyranny and corruption beneath its wheels; when, lo! as a new era of happiness seemed about to

dawn, this blind, mysterious power, the effects of which everyone could see, and of which none could tell the nature, had again asserted its malignant influence, and placed a bigoted and hypocritical Turk on the throne of the Osmans. There was nothing to do but to submit passively and to despair. But no one dared to speak aloud. Conscious that spies were lurking in the crowd, comments were made in low and fearful whispers, with frequent and uneasy glances around.

"Why do you and your compatriots speak so low?" asked an Englishman in the throng of his companion, one of the Young Turkey party, who had accompanied him to the spectacle.

"Hush," whispered the Turk—"look at that man just behind you, he is a *mouchard*." He added in a low voice, "You are a stranger, and come from afar. You do not understand that we are in the East."

"But you might have the courage of your opinions."

"You have yet to learn, Effendi, what is the effect of an arbitrary Government. Independence is not in the nature of the Turk,

and, what may astonish you still more, it is, in the case of many, not to their taste. Thought can only flow freely when the body is free: here, body and soul are in bondage. One single will disposes both of the one and of the other. What would you have? It is the effect of centuries of oppression."

The Sultan felt the effect of the silent censure passed upon him. He must have thought of that other ride, when Murad passed through the streets amid a chorus of blessings and good wishes, devoured by the eager looks of young and old, Turk and Rayah alike. He scanned the multitude uneasily, and as he noted their dejected air, he flung himself back in his carriage and tried to keep out of sight. But he could not hide from himself. His conscience asked him, Where is thy brother? He could not answer. The first *aliéniste* in Europe had indeed been sent for, but he knew that the whole thing was a farce. Dr. Leidersdorf had not been allowed a free hand in his brother's treatment, and the

usurper, for he was no less, had consciously, by his passive and guilty acquiescence in the intrigues of the conspirators, helped forward their design for his own advancement. A keen pang shot through his whole being as he recalled his interview with Midhat and the Sheik. The picture which his unscrupulous Minister had given of his brother's nervous crisis and mental derangement had resembled so closely his own that he could not help asking himself which was the greater madman. Was it just that his brother, who had always treated him with kindness, whose brilliant youth so contrasted with the dulness of his own, should languish away his life in a palace under conditions which made it little better than a prison?

Pooh! pooh! What were all these qualms which passed through his mind? He passed in review all the circumstances which had been winding themselves round him. He had, after all, done nothing to help himself to the crown. He was just a tool in the hands of his Ministers, as every other Sultan had been, and the events which had happened

were not of his making. It was Fate, not he, who had deposed Murad.

But if he turned a deaf ear to his conscience, which seemed to grow fainter and more shadowy as he turned from it, Fear, another spectre, harder to exorcise, was to fill his heart with mistrust and foreboding. From that moment he was to be haunted, to the exclusion of all other State cares, with the one absorbing dread of his brother's restoration to power, and to dream of plots and stratagems in his favour.

CHAPTER XXXI.

After his deposition, Murad was installed in the sumptuous palace of Tcheragan, within the limits of which he was flattered with almost regal pomp and luxury. His retinue was but slightly diminished, his cellars stocked with the choicest vintages, and his harem supplied with the most beauteous Circassians. Was it fraternal solicitude on the part of Abdul Hamid, or was it perfidy? Was his unwonted generosity to be put down to benevolence, or was he imitating the treacherous conduct of Austria towards the son of Napoleon I., and only seeking to pamper Murad's sensuality, so that the fallen monarch might sink into imbecility? If his intentions were honest, why did he thrust the services of the empiric Capoleone on the unfortunate invalid? And

why was not the superstitious dervish removed? How was it that, when the Prince, who grew rapidly stronger, insisted on dismissing these pernicious attendants, his health began still more rapidly to improve? And when he had thoroughly recovered, why did Hamid, if not from excessive terror, send three babbling chamberlains to prison for announcing the fact? And why, from that date, was the palace of Tcheragan guarded as an inaccessible fortress? The following narrative will throw some light on these questions.

Two years later one of Murad's most devoted partisans succeeded in making his way into the palace in the teeth of almost insurmountable obstacles and dangers.

After his first outburst of joy at meeting his friend, Murad remarked with a sad smile, "You see me, my friend, deprived of liberty, and the right of speaking even to my own family. My brother has behaved most meanly with me. He has surrounded me with spies, and he seeks to pervert those who

are interested in my fate. He has never understood the gravity of the political situation. He has no other care but to prevent Murad V. from the resumption of sovereignty. It is that which murders his sleep, and not the pre-occupations of war or the welfare of his people. The Turkish victories are exaggerated, their defeats are suppressed, his retinue combine to keep him in the dark. He allows himself, like a blind man, to be led by Mahmud-Damat, who is another Mahmud-Nedim, only more ignorant and less scrupulous, if that be possible. All those who could have given him good advice he has banished or sent to prison."

Here Murad made a pause; then he inquired regarding several of his acquaintances and friends, notably about a certain Cassape, a witty journalist, who was condemned to three years' imprisonment among robbers and assassins, for having represented Karagheny in chains, with the inscription: "The liberty of the press within the limits of the law."

"Cassape does not perhaps know why he is treated with such severity," continued the Prince. "He owes that to an old grudge of my brother against him. In adapting a piece of Molière for the Turkish theatre, he called the farce 'Pinti Hamid,' after a certain legendary Harpagon, whose tomb is shown at Scutari. Now, Abdul Hamid, whose economy is proverbial, took it personally. He came to me furious against the translator of the 'Avare.' I explained. 'Cassape,' replied my brother, 'might as well have named his miser Murad.' 'Yes,' I answered, 'but then it would not have been connected with a popular legend, and would have lost its point.' 'That does not matter, he would not then have offended me or made me believe that I was being turned into ridicule.' And, in order to drive this absurd supposition out of his head, I was obliged to swear on the Koran that I had nothing to do with the matter. He believed me, but from that moment he conceived an obstinate hatred against Cassape, whom he has taken the

first opportunity of persecuting. I know Abdul Hamid. Once a prejudice has seized on his mind, it is very difficult to eradicate it; besides that, like all fanatics, he is very vindictive."

Much more he said, but no more of his conversation need be quoted to show that his intellect and health were unimpaired, and that he bore his odious captivity with fortitude.

In the following year, the Sultan, Abdul Hamid, was so utterly terrified at a conspiracy made in his brother's favour, by a certain Ali Suavi of Bockhara, that Murad and his mother were transferred to the pavilion of Malta Kiosk, situated in the middle of Yeldiz Park, the dark roof of which, peeping out from the trees, is carelessly pointed out to the stranger as one of the sights of Constantinople by the apathetic guide. Here the reigning Sultan exercises a sleepless vigilance over his unhappy brother, and has made strenuous efforts to prevent any communication between the staff of the ex-Sultan and the outside

world. The watchword at Malta Kiosk is that whosoever shall gain admittance inside without authority must not go out alive.

EPILOGUE.

LONDON is the paradise of exiles. Under its shadow of right of asylum, the most illustrious refugees have taken shelter, and the historian, who is anxious to find the key to any political enigma, to any complicated dynastic plot, has often a better chance of succeeding here than on the actual scene of events.

It would be unwise, for instance, to seek information on the shores of the Bosphorus regarding the real condition of Murad V. after his seventeen years of captivity in Malta Kiosk, that sombre and melancholy dwelling, surrounded by a triple enclosure of high walls, within whose precincts it is death to enter. No one on the spot, not even the Ambassadors of the Great Powers, can get any definite information about the unfortunate

State prisoner. The reigning Sultan, more and more suspicious and fearful with advancing years, has gone so far as to forbid, under the severest penalties, that the name of his ill-starred brother be either printed or pronounced. To possess his portrait is considered as a crime of high treason punishable by death or perpetual banishment.

Imagine, then, the surprise of Khosrew Bey, a young Turkish poet, who, having fled to London for political reasons, heard from the mouth of Lady B——, a noble sexagenarian of Mayfair, to whom he presented a letter of introduction in April, 1895, that she had but very recently had news of his friend Murad from a Circassian lady who had been one of the wives of the ex-sovereign, and who continued to receive direct messages from the alleged madman of Malta Kiosk.

"Oh, madam," exclaimed Khosrew, "may I venture to suggest that you have been duped by a clever impostor."

"It would be very easy to convince you to

the contrary," said the lady, slightly piqued at his air of scepticism, "by presenting you to the princess in question, who speaks your language perfectly, who has, indeed, in a certain sense been your queen, since she was for some time the wife, or one of the wives, of Murad."

"Ah! madam, I entreat you, do so at once."

"I should only be too pleased if it were possible, but my illustrious friend has, as you can easily understand, the strongest reasons for not betraying her incognito."

"Madam, you know my sentiments towards Murad, as you know the hate I bear to his persecutors. Do you doubt my devotion—my absolute discretion?"

"That is not the question. My friend has never allowed me to introduce her to anyone. But I do not leave you without hope. I will plead your cause warmly; perhaps she may make an exception in your favour."

A fortnight after this conversation, Khosrew Bey, whose scepticism had been increasing in the interval, received a note from

Lady B——, begging him to call on her at once.

"Your incredulity," she said, smiling, "has effectually roused my *amour propre*. I have exerted myself in your interest, and gained your cause, though not without difficulty, nor without having to make some concessions. You shall see my Turkish princess, and convince yourself that she is not a Circassian of English or American manufacture; but I have been obliged to give a guarantee for you that you will never seek either to see her again or to discover where she is. I shall conduct you to her house with your eyes bandaged, and reconduct you in the same manner. Can I trust you? Will you consent?"

"Certainly."

"Very well. We will go this evening, after dinner."

Three hours afterwards, about nightfall, an elegant carriage to which two black horses were harnessed, stopped before the house. It was the carriage of the mysterious unknown. As soon as her ladyship and the Bey had taken their places, the blinds

were drawn down and the doors locked. The coachman plied his whip vigorously, and the horses started off at a fast pace.

The drive lasted about an hour and a half. What direction was taken, what streets were traversed, Khosrew was all the more incapable of guessing, as his companion purposely engaged his attention by narrating the odyssey of her mysterious friend.

She had succeeded in escaping from Yeldiz Kiosk, at the time when the household of the State prisoner had been completely changed, and three of the most devoted of his chamberlains sent to prison by the order of Abdul Hamid, who dreaded lest the news of his brother's perfect recovery, which had so rejoiced his friends, should be spread abroad by them. She first of all took refuge in the house of one of her friends, but as she was dogged by the whole army of Hamid's spies and detectives, she was obliged, in order to save this hospitable family from annoyance, under favour of night, and in the disguise of a cabin-boy, to embark on board an English steamer, where, protected by a powerful

embassy, she remained in safety until the departure of the vessel.

She went to the East Indies, where her ideal beauty attracted much attention, and subsequently married a rich Mahomedan of Bombay. A year later she became a widow, and liquidating the large fortune which her husband had left her, she took up her abode in England, where, by the help of her friend, Lady B——, she consecrated a large portion of her revenue to keeping up a correspondence with Murad, and encouraging the hopes of the ever-increasing number of his adherents.

"But here we are at our destination," said Lady B—— suddenly. "I have given you these details of her history, for our visit at this late hour must necessarily be short."

The carriage had indeed stopped in front of a villa, which, for aught Khosrew Bey knew, might have been situated either in the town or in the country. In front of the villa was a long garden walk, thickly shaded by trees, and left in total darkness. Two servants with bronzed faces, each holding a dark lantern, opened the carriage door, and introduced

Lady B—— and her friend into a drawing-room furnished in the Oriental style with red divans and Persian carpets.

While the young poet was wondering at this strange adventure, the Princess, who had passed through a secret door, hidden by thick hangings of Indian silk, stood before them. She was a woman of queenly bearing, a pure type of classic beauty, with large black eyes, full of life and fire, and an expression at once sweet and intelligent.

She advanced towards her guests, and with a gracious gesture bade them welcome.

"You will excuse me," she said in English, with a strange but musical accent, "for having fixed on such an unseasonable hour for your visit." "You especially must pardon me," she added in Turkish, addressing Khosrew Bey, "for having brought you here like a condemned prisoner; but my friend has no doubt explained to you that these precautions are not useless, even in this free country, so far from Stamboul, to avoid the snares which the numerous spies of Abdul Hamid might spread for us—for you and for me. But this will be

the first and the last trial to which you will be exposed, for I leave this house to-morrow. I heard from my friend that you did not believe her report, and I simply wished to convince you that there is in London a sister soul to your own, as deeply interested as yourself in the sad fate of our dear Murad."

The young poet, overcome with wonder at the adventure, and dazzled, as if he had seen a celestial vision, by the marvellous beauty of the stranger, could only stammer out some inarticulate words of gratitude and admiration.

The Princess smiled at his embarrassment. "But I must show you my credentials. You know Murad's writing, of course. Here is the last letter I received from him, in which, amongst other matters, he speaks of the earnest desire of his adherents to see him once more on the throne. But read for yourself."

"It is for the people, who have allowed me to be shut up like a criminal, to break my chains; they must declare whether or not I am to resume my sovereignty. I await that

day. Before it comes I shall make no effort whatsoever to deliver myself from the anguish of my captivity, or even from plots against my life."

Khosrew Bey asked if she thought his restoration was probable.

"Allah is great, and our Holy Prophet has said in the Alkoran, that 'he does not love the persecutors, and that he knows the hypocrites, on whom he has affixed a mark on the nose.' The wrath of Allah is all the more terrible when it is tardy. What has been the fate of those who have injured our legitimate Sultan? Hussein Avni has been struck dead by the avenging hand of Hassan; Midhat has been poisoned after an exile of eight months at Taëf, cursing the usurper whom he helped to the crown; Mehemet Ruchdi, less guilty, met the same fate. Two actors alone of this lugubrious drama remain alive, Abdul Hamid and Murad. The one is still on the throne, the other languishes in prison; but who can say what a near future reserves for them? If Providence decreed that Murad, who, as you have just learnt, is alive and in

full possession of his faculties, was not to succumb to the sufferings of his imprisonment, it is because He has His designs concerning him, and has not been unmindful of his anguish."

Having said these words, the Princess bade a most cordial adieu to her two visitors, who, greatly wondering, went their way.

THE END.

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